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ABSTRACT

The 1997 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Customer Satisfaction survey was conducted to find out whether the NCES as an agency was responding to the needs of customers and to identify areas for improvement. Federal, state, and local education officials and academic researchers were asked about their satisfaction with NCES products and services and about other organizations from which they receive education data. There were 2,948 eligible individuals in the sample, and responses were received from 2,465 (84%). Local policymakers are a key customer group, yet only half were current users of NCES products and services. A majority of users were frequent users, and a very high percentage of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with NCES publications and reports, and these publications and reports received high marks on most aspects. Users were satisfied with all aspects of NCES publications except timeliness. NCES data files were not as widely used as reports and publications, but were ranked as highly. Users were most dissatisfied with the timeliness and use of data files. Most customers did not know how to contact the NCES and were not fully aware of the broad range of services. NCES users most often used their State Department of Education as another source of education data. Local policymakers were apt to prefer their benchmarks organizations and rate them more highly than the NCES, but federal and state policymakers did not rate benchmark organizations above the NCES. Overall, NCES did well in comparison with the "best of the rest," but areas for improvement were noted. Four appendixes contain supplemental information, including the survey. (Contains 30 figures and 28 tables.) (SLD)

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Technical Report January 1999

1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey Report

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

Technical Report **January 1999**

1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey Report

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Foreword

A vital part of the mission of the National Center for Education Statistics is to provide data about education in the United States and other nations to the public. The information NCES provides must bear on important issues in education, and it must be relevant to the needs of our data users.

The 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey was conducted to find out whether we as an agency are responding to the needs of our customers and to identify areas for improvement. We asked federal, state, and local education officials, and academic researchers about their satisfaction with NCES products and services. We also asked our respondents to tell us how NCES compares to other organizations from which they receive education data, so that NCES might benchmark against them. I want to thank all those who participated in the survey.

I am gratified that the survey found high levels of satisfaction with our publications, data files, and services. At the same time, the results indicate areas in which we must improve our performance. Knowing whether NCES is collecting and disseminating relevant data, in a manner useful to our customers, will assist us in performing our role as the nation's foremost provider of education information.

Pascal D. Forgione, Jr.
Commissioner of Education Statistics

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

In 1997, the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveyed a sample of policymakers and academic researchers to determine their levels of satisfaction and needs related to:

- NCES publications and reports
- NCES data files
- NCES services

The survey also asked benchmarking questions about other organizations from which customers obtained education data.

This report summarizes the results of the 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey. All satisfaction results reported apply to those customers who indicated that they had used the product or service in question.

TARGET POPULATION

The 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey does not reflect—nor was it intended to reflect—the total NCES customer base or the views of all its customers. Rather, it focuses on responses of specific customer groups whose use of NCES products and services can have an important effect on the "condition and progress of education."

Key NCES customers are policymakers and academic researchers who focus on issues of educational improvement.

Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels, and academic researchers who focus on issues of educational improvement are key segments of the NCES customer base. The 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey targeted the following groups:

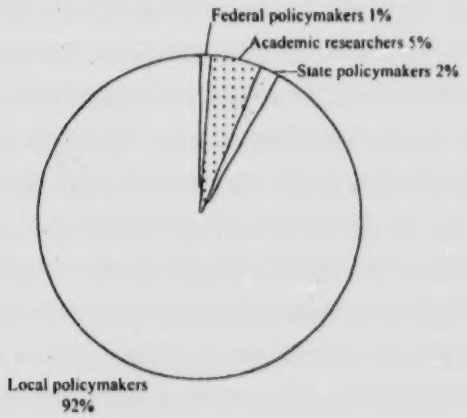
- Federal policymakers from the U.S. Department of Education (Assistant and Under Secretaries), National Science Foundation, Office of Management and Budget, Congressional Research Service, General Accounting Office, and Senate and House Committees.
- State policymakers from the National Conference of State Legislators, Council of Chief State School Officers, State Higher Education Executive Finance Officers, and Chief Officers of State Library Agencies.

- Local policymakers from elementary/secondary school districts and postsecondary institutions—including school district superintendents and higher education chief administrators such as institutional researchers.

- Academic researchers, identified as center directors from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, regional lab directors, deans of Schools of Education, and chairs of Sociology departments.

From a list of over 20,000 such individuals, NCES sent questionnaires to 2,980. There were 2,948 eligible individuals in the sample and 2,465 respondents, for a response rate of 84 percent. Respondents had the option of returning the questionnaires by mail or being interviewed over the telephone. Of the 2,465 responses, 33 percent were received by mail and 67 percent via telephone. Figure A shows the distribution of the four main customer groups in the target population. See appendix A for the questionnaire and appendix B for details of the survey methodology.

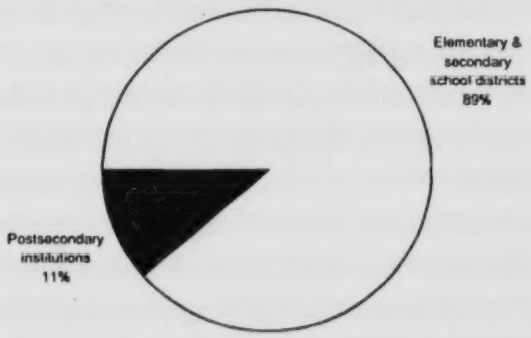
Figure A.—Percentage distribution of customer groups in target population



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

A very large percentage of the target population falls in the local policymaker group (92%), which consists of individuals affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts (89%) or postsecondary institutions (11%), as figure B shows. Consequently, the survey results are heavily dominated by the responses of local policymakers, particularly those affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts.

Figure B.—Local policymaker affiliation

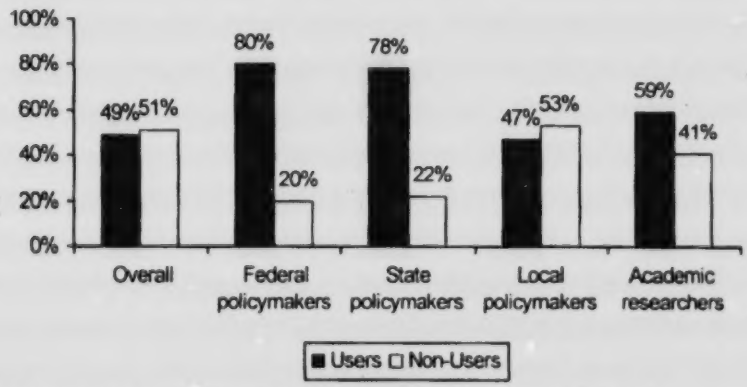


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Local policymakers are a key customer group yet only half are current users of NCES products and services.

Overall, an almost equal number of customers had used NCES products or services (49%) as had not (51%), as shown in figure C. Most federal and state policymakers were users (80% and 78%, respectively), whereas about half of the local policymakers and academic researchers were users (47% and 59%, respectively).

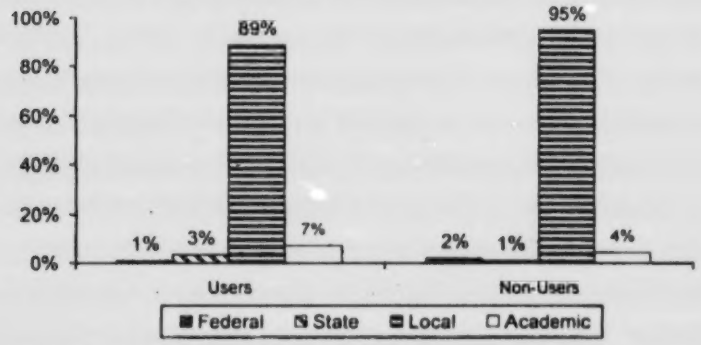
Figure C.—Users and non-users of NCES products and services, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

As figure D shows, a very large percentage of both users and non-users consist of local policymakers (89% and 95%, respectively). Among the local policymakers, individuals affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts made up most of the user and non-user groups (88% and 89%, respectively).

Figure D.—Customer groups by use of NCES products and services



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

A majority of users are frequent users and most often use products and services for general information.

Customers who used NCES products and services tended to be frequent users; a majority (63%) used them at least several times a year. Federal and state policymakers were the most frequent users. Among local policymakers, those affiliated with postsecondary institutions used NCES products and services more frequently than did those in elementary and secondary school districts.

Customers used NCES products and services for many purposes. However, the predominant uses cited by customers were general information (72%), research and analysis (64%), and planning (56%).

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

More than half of the customers (56%) had not used NCES publications and reports in the past 3 years. Customers were asked to indicate all the reasons why they had not. The two most common responses were not being aware of NCES publications and reports (59%) and their work not requiring use of the publications and reports (40%).

Usage of NCES publications and reports varied across customer groups: state policymakers (74%), federal

policymakers (72%), academic researchers (51%), and local policymakers (43%).

A very high percentage of users reported being very satisfied or satisfied with NCES publications and reports.

Statistical compendia received very high marks, with over 85 percent of compendia users reporting that they were very satisfied or satisfied:

- Condition of Education (91%)
- Digest of Education Statistics (90%)
- Projections of Education Statistics (86%)

Although satisfaction with these compendia was high across all four customer groups, local policymakers (the largest group of users) consistently had slightly lower percentages of satisfaction (ranging from 86% to 91%) compared to the other three groups (ranging from 89% to 98%). And among the local policymakers, users in postsecondary institutions consistently had slightly higher satisfaction levels (ranging from 90% to 95%) compared to those in elementary and secondary school districts (ranging from 85% to 91%).

Users also reported a high level of satisfaction with publications across each of the NCES program areas:

- Educational assessment (93%)
- Other publications (91%)
- Elementary and secondary education (90%)
- Postsecondary education (84%)
- National longitudinal studies (81%)
- Library statistics (72%)

NCES publications and reports received high marks on most aspects.

Users reported being very satisfied or satisfied with most aspects of NCES publications and reports:

- Overall quality of reports (90%)
- Comprehensiveness (88%)
- Clarity of the writing (87%)
- Usefulness to work (86%)
- Accuracy (80%)
- Timeliness of information (72%)

Users also gave high marks for the usefulness of the various publication formats. Except for technological and

methodological reports (rated very useful or useful by 70% of users), all NCES publication formats were considered useful by 85 to 97 percent of users.

Users were satisfied with all aspects except timeliness of NCES publications, an aspect of high importance to them.

This high level of satisfaction was undoubtedly achieved due to the quality of NCES publications and reports. No more than 5 percent of users reported dissatisfaction with such factors as overall quality of report, accuracy, comprehensiveness, clarity of writing, and usefulness to their work. However, just over 17 percent of users reported dissatisfaction with timeliness.

ELECTRONIC DATA FILES

While a very low percentage (7%) of customers overall had used NCES electronic data files, usage was higher among state policymakers, federal policymakers, and academic researchers (31%, 18%, and 14%, respectively) than among local policymakers (6%). However, the percentage of data file users among academic researchers (14%) was surprisingly low for a group with a research focus.

The most frequently cited reason for not using NCES data files (62%) was the same as the one cited for not using publications—the customers were not aware of the products.

NCES data files were not as widely used, but were ranked as highly, as publications and reports.

Most of the users of NCES electronic data files reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the data files, within a range of 67 percent to 95 percent. This is comparable to the high level of satisfaction reported for publications and reports: 72 percent to 93 percent.

Electronic data files that were used more frequently had higher levels of satisfaction. For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data file was one of the three data files used most often by each of the four customer groups. More than 93 percent of NAEP data file users who were federal policymakers, local policymakers, or academic researchers were very satisfied or satisfied with the NAEP data file. It is important to note, however, that the NAEP electronic data receiving the most use is a compendium of statistical tables rather than a raw data file.

Levels of satisfaction with comprehensiveness, accuracy, and timeliness of electronic data files achieved a range of 52 percent to 82 percent very satisfied or satisfied (compared to 72% to 88% for publications and reports).

Users were most dissatisfied with timeliness and ease of use of the data files, aspects of high importance to them.

Users were most dissatisfied with the timeliness of the data files (25%), followed by ease of use (16%). This is especially meaningful given that most users ranked accuracy of the information (40%) as the first most important aspect, followed by a virtual tie between timeliness of file release (21%) and ease of use (20%).

SERVICES

Two-thirds (66%) of the customers did not know how to contact NCES. However, significantly more federal and state policymakers and academic researchers knew how to contact NCES (76%, 69%, and 45%, respectively) than did local policymakers (32%).

Most customers did not know how to contact NCES and were not fully aware of the broad range of NCES services.

Less than half of the customers were aware of each of the NCES services:

- Internet services (49%)
- National Education Data Resource Center (48%)
- Toll free number for education statistics (46%)
- NCES conferences (45%)
- NCES training seminars or workshops (42%)
- NCES fellows program (38%)
- NCES Faxback service (37%)

Customers were most aware of the NCES site on the Internet and reported using this service the most as well.

The NCES site on the Internet (10%) and the National Education Data Resource Center (8%) were the two services used the most by customers.

Most users reported being very satisfied or satisfied with NCES services, within a range of 88 percent to 100 percent. This is higher than reported for both NCES electronic data files (67% to 95%) and NCES publications and reports (72% to 93%).

Users' satisfaction with services was higher than for electronic data files and publications and reports.

Overall, users were also very satisfied or satisfied with the following aspects of NCES services:

- Ease of obtaining the information (92%)
- Extent to which the information met needs (92%)
- Courtesy of staff (90%)
- Speed with which the information was received (89%)
- Staff expertise (85%)
- Time needed to reach knowledgeable staff (84%)
- Handling of complaints (75%)

BENCHMARK ORGANIZATIONS

NCES users most often used their State Department of Education as another source of education data.

Other than NCES, users most often reported obtaining education data during the last 3 years from the following three organizations:

- State Departments of Education (96%)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (86%)
- U.S. Bureau of Census (84%)

In addition, 71 percent of NCES users reported that they *frequently* used data from their State Department of Education and 51 percent *frequently* used data from ASCD, whereas only 7 percent *frequently* used Census data.

Other organizations for which there was a fairly high level of overall use follow:

- Educational Research Service (83%)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (79%)
- National Education Association (77%)
- American Council of Education (64%)
- National Center for Health Statistics (62%)

NCES users also named the one organization other than NCES with which they were most favorably impressed (i.e., a benchmark organization).

Overall, the three most cited benchmark organizations were:

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (33%)

- State Departments of Education (19%)
- Educational Research Service (7%)

Customer groups differed in their top choices of benchmark organizations.

The benchmark organizations cited most frequently by each of the four customer groups were:

Federal policymakers:	Census	(22%)
State policymakers:	Census	(29%)
Local policymakers:	ASCD	(35%)
Academic researchers:	ASCD	(19%)

Local policymakers rated benchmark organizations as better than NCES on all dimensions except "quality of product" and "frequency of data collection."

NCES users rated their benchmark organizations as better than, the same as, or worse than NCES on the following seven dimensions:

- Coverage of topics in education
- Frequency of data collection
- Timeliness of data release
- Responsiveness to needs
- Knowledge of staff
- Effort to meet needs
- Quality of product

Overall, and among local policymakers, a majority of users rated their benchmark organizations as better than NCES on all dimensions except quality of product and frequency of data collection. Since local policymakers rated their benchmark organizations more favorably than NCES on multiple dimensions, their most cited benchmark organizations (ASCD and State Departments of Education) can provide valuable information on how NCES can better meet their needs.

In contrast, a majority of federal and state policymakers and academic researchers did not rate their benchmark organizations as better than NCES on any dimension.

On all seven dimensions, federal policymakers, state policymakers, and academic researchers more often rated their benchmark organizations as worse than or the same as NCES. Federal policymakers viewed NCES the most favorably, with 70 percent or more rating their benchmark organizations as worse than or the same as NCES on all dimensions.

Users provided comments on how NCES could better meet their needs and what types of problems they have experienced. The top three comment areas were:

- Access/awareness (42%)
- Problems with products (26%)
- Data needs (17%)

Users indicated a need to improve the awareness and marketing of NCES products and services.

In the area of access/awareness, users most often cited a need to improve the awareness and marketing of NCES products and services (16%). Timeliness was perceived as the greatest problem with products (15%), confirming the dissatisfaction results presented above. The most cited data needs (11%) were for more disaggregated statistics (e.g., rural/small school district vs. urban school district) or more information on specific topics (e.g., persistence and graduation rates).

NON-USERS

NCES non-users most often used their State Department of Education as another source of education data.

Non-users of NCES products and services reported obtaining education data from the following organizations during the last 3 years:

- State Departments of Education (92%)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (69%)
- The U.S. Bureau of Census (56%)
- National Education Association (54%)
- Educational Research Service (52%)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (51%)
- American Council of Education (35%)
- National Center for Health Statistics (32%)

However, only State Departments of Education were used *frequently* by a majority of non-users (72%).

Needs for information to help with curriculum planning and institution/school governance were rated high among non-users.

Non-users' responses to a question about needs for education data fell into six categories:

- Curriculum and planning/standards (24%)
- Institution/school governance (22%)
- Specific education issues (17%)
- Other (16%)
- Local/state/regional information and comparisons (12%)
- Use other sources (9%)

Federal policymakers most often cited a need for information on specific education issues (22%). State policymakers most often indicated a need for local, state,

or regional education data (26%), while local policymakers reported a need for information to help with curriculum and planning (25%) and institution/school governance (21%). The greatest need of academic researchers was also for information related to institution/school governance (37%).

CONCLUSIONS

The 1997 survey has two intended uses: to assess current users' satisfaction with NCES products and services and to identify areas for improvement.

High ratings are cause for satisfaction and concern.

As in 1996, NCES is very pleased that customers rate its publications and reports, data files, and services as highly as they did in this second survey. However, the data collected also suggest that the more experienced the user, the higher the level of satisfaction and that satisfaction often varies significantly across customer groups. This suggests that care is required in basing performance standards on overall results of this survey, because subsequent broad-based surveys may show lower satisfaction overall depending on the types of customers being included in the survey.

NCES will strive to maintain, and improve if possible, high customer satisfaction.

Customers have responded to NCES positively. With those expressions of satisfaction, however, have come some warnings about areas that NCES needs to improve. It is now up to NCES to respond positively to the customers —to take those actions that will improve the quality, timeliness, and usability of its products and services on behalf of its customers.

Even with high ratings, users sent a strong message about timeliness, but not at the expense of accuracy.

As was true in 1996, a comparatively low percentage of users were very satisfied or satisfied with the timeliness of NCES publications and reports (72%) and data files (51%). These comparatively low satisfaction levels are especially significant for an aspect that most users ranked as *second most important overall* for both NCES publications and reports and NCES data files.

The survey results make clear, however, that improvements in timeliness would not be desired by users at the expense of accuracy, the *top* ranked aspect in terms of importance, and an area in which NCES achieved high marks.

NCES managers will assess customer feedback and take appropriate action.

Although NCES products and services had high marks overall, the results from the 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey are being shared with program managers. These managers can use the data to determine what can be done to improve service to customers and timeliness of products and services.

NCES will take further action to advise customers—current and potential—of its products and services.

NCES customers are not aware of the broad range of products and services available to them. For example, of the customers who had *not* used NCES *publications and reports* in the past 3 years (56%), more than half (59%) said the reason was that they were not aware of the products. Of the 93 percent of customers who had *not* used NCES *data files* in the past 3 years, 62 percent said the reason was that they were not aware of them. In addition, less than half of the customers were aware of any of the seven NCES services identified by the survey—and only 34 percent of the customers overall said they knew how to contact NCES. *Clearly, the implication for NCES is that outreach is especially important.*

NCES did well in comparison to the "best of the rest."

An important part of this survey was to compare NCES products and services against other organizations—referred to as benchmark organizations—from which NCES users also get information. The survey listed eight organizations and included an open-ended "other" category, to which NCES users filled in well over 300 organizations. Of these, users were asked to select a source of education data other than NCES with which they were "most favorably impressed." Then they were asked to compare the selected best of the rest with NCES.

Federal and state policymakers and academic researchers were more likely to consider NCES the same as or better than the benchmark organization, and did so across all areas. The same was not true of local researchers, who chose the benchmark organization as better in all categories except quality of product and frequency of data collection.

NCES needs to consider follow-on surveys and focus groups.

However, there may be a correlation between the usefulness and level of the data (national, state, local) and the chosen "better" organization, especially in rating such areas as coverage of topics in education and responsiveness to the customer's needs. Thus, NCES may conduct further focus groups with their key customers to understand more about their highest rated and most frequently used benchmark organizations, such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the State Departments of Education.

In other words, to develop information that will allow a plan of action for improvement, NCES needs more information than that its performance is better than, the same as, or worse than a given organization. There should be a similarity or correlation between the information provided by NCES and the benchmark organization so that a meaningful comparison can be made—and it is often important to know why one organization is chosen over another.

I. Introduction

NCES Mission

The first Federal education agency was established in 1867 "for the purpose of collecting such statistics and facts as shall show the condition and progress of education in the several States and territories . . . ." The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) currently performs these duties in a greatly expanded Department of Education. Its primary responsibility is to collect, analyze, and disseminate statistics relating to the status of education in the United States.

The NCES mission is, in itself, closely related to the public good. It requires that NCES collect information from and provide information to the public—its customers.

Customer Service Requirements

The Government Performance and Results Act was enacted on August 3, 1993, to "provide for the establishment of strategic planning and performance measurement in the Federal Government." One purpose of the landmark legislation is to:

> *"improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction . . . ."*

On September 11, 1993, the President issued Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards," which called on all Federal agencies to develop plans to better serve their customers. This order requires agencies to survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services.

On March 22, 1995, the President sent additional guidance to the heads of agencies in a memorandum entitled, "Improving Customer Service." The memorandum established that customer surveys are "ongoing" and "continuing" requirements. Further, it established that development and tracking of customer

service measures, standards, and performance should be integrated with other performance initiatives, including strategic planning and performance measurement under the Government Performance and Results Act.

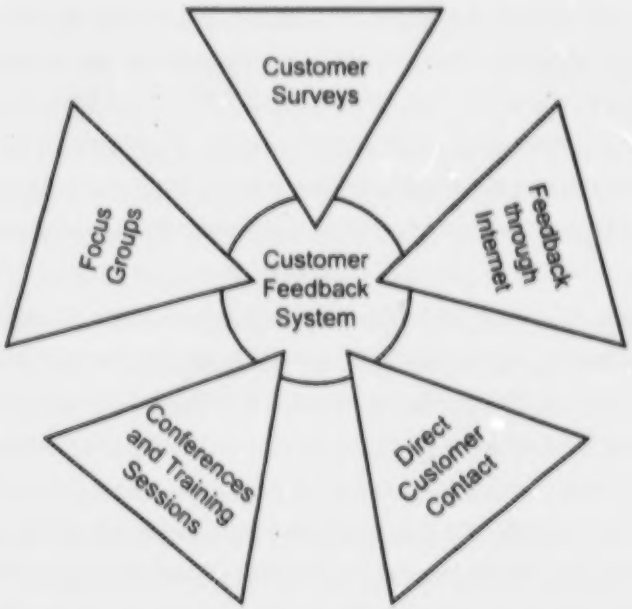
NCES Customer Service Team and Customer Feedback System

To respond to these requirements, NCES assembled a customer service team to initiate and oversee many customer-related initiatives. These have included:

- Conducting customer focus groups
- Training employees about customer service delivery
- Completing the 1996 customer survey and report
- Completing the 1997 customer survey that is the subject of this report

To give a broader perspective, the customer survey is part of a larger NCES customer feedback system, illustrated in figure 1 below. Therefore, this report is part, but certainly not all, of the means by which NCES captures and uses customer feedback.

Figure 1.—Five key points of customer feedback



NCES Customer Base

NCES has customers of many types and interests. They include:

- Policymakers (local, state, and national)
- Federal government customers
- Media, education associations
- Administrators and heads of institutions
- Researchers
- Parents, teachers, and community leaders

These customers vary in how directly NCES' work affects them and the extent to which they use (or are even aware of) the broad range of NCES products and services. Each customer group was the target of at least one customer focus group meeting and report that NCES completed in 1994 and 1995.

1996 Customer Survey Target Population

The target population for the 1996 customer survey was *known customers across all categories of NCES customers*. From an initial population of 11,286, NCES sent questionnaires to 4,760, of whom over 39 percent (1,887) responded. The affiliations of the respondents to the 1996 survey follow:

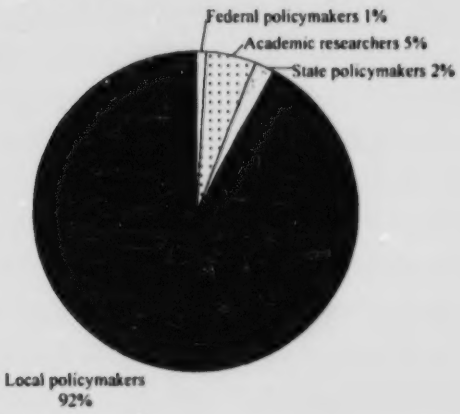
- University, college, or other postsecondary institution (35%)
- State or local government agency (22%)
- Professional organization (21%)
- Elementary or secondary school (9%)
- Other (including media, library, and no affiliation) (9%)
- Federal (including White House and Congress) (4%)

The 1996 survey provided a broad overview of customers' use of and satisfaction with NCES products and services, established a baseline of information, and yielded useful information from which to shape subsequent surveys.

1997 Customer Survey Target Population

The target population for the 1997 customer survey included two important segments of the overall NCES customer base—policymakers and researchers. The target population was divided into four groups (strata), which are described below (see figure 2):

Figure 2.—Percentage distribution of customer groups in target population



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

- **Federal policymakers:** This group makes up 1 percent of the target population and includes U.S. Department of Education Assistant and Under Secretaries, National Science Foundation (NSF), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congressional Research Service (CRS), General Accounting Office (GAO), Senate and House Committees (1%).

- **State policymakers:** This group makes up 2 percent of the target population and includes National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), State Higher Education Executive Finance Officers (SHEEFO), Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA).

- **Local policymakers:** This group makes up 92 percent of the target population and comprises individuals affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts or postsecondary institutions (89% and 11%, respectively). (See figure 3.) This group includes school district superintendents and higher education chief administrators, primarily directors of institutional research.

Figure 3.—Local policymaker affiliation

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

- **Academic researchers:** This group makes up 5 percent of the target population and includes Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) center directors, regional lab directors, School of Education deans, chairs of Sociology departments.

1997 Customer Survey Results

According to NCES standards, response rates (R_o) are to be calculated as the ratio of the number of completed interviews to the number of sample respondents drawn minus respondents considered to be out-of-scope.[1] From an initial total population of 20,033, NCES sent questionnaires to 2,980. There were 2,948 eligible individuals in the sample; 84 percent (2,465) responded. Respondents had the option of returning the questionnaires by mail or being interviewed over the telephone. Of the 2,465 responses, 33 percent were received by mail and 67 percent via telephone. The results, reported in sections II to VII of this report, are weighted to the population. (See appendix B for methodology.) All differences in percentages reported in the text of this report have been tested as significant at the 5 percent level of significance (using Bonferroni adjustment, see appendix B).[2]

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[1] See U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *NCES Statistical Standards*, NCES 92-021, by Emmett Flemming, Jr. (Washington, DC: 1992), 30.

[2] For an explanation of the Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons, see Rupert G. Miller, *Simultaneous Statistical Inference* (New York: McGraw Hill Co., 1981) or Olive Jean Dunn, "Multiple Comparisons Among Means," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 56 (293) (March 1961): 52-64.

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As in 1996, the 1997 survey was designed to determine information about customers and their levels of satisfaction and needs related to:

- NCES publications and reports
- NCES data files
- NCES services

A new section was introduced in 1997 to capture more useful information about other sources of education data used by NCES customers. The purpose of these questions is to develop measures of comparison between NCES and other organizations that can serve as benchmarks for future evaluations.

Another section was added to collect information on non-users, those individuals who have never used NCES products or services but who, based on their needs for education data, are potential customers.

Further information on methodology is in appendix B.

Important Points to Remember

The percentages reported are obtained by weighting respondents up to the population size in each stratum. Since 92 percent of the targeted population were local policymakers, it is important to remember that percentages provided in this report will be heavily dominated by responses from this subgroup.

Furthermore, of the local policymakers, most (89%) were affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts. Therefore, responses of the elementary and secondary school districts will also dominate the "overall" results significantly.

Again, this survey does not reflect—nor was it intended to reflect—the total NCES customer base or the views of all its customers. Rather, it focuses on responses of specific customer groups whose use of NCES products and services can have an important effect on the "condition and progress of education."

What the Surveys Can and Cannot Tell Us

As in 1996, the 1997 survey has two intended uses: to assess current users' satisfaction with NCES products and services and to identify areas for improvement.

The data collected in 1996 and 1997 suggest that care is required in basing performance standards on customer surveys. Since the data suggest that the more experienced the user, the higher the level of satisfaction, subsequent broad-based surveys may show lower satisfaction overall.

Consequently, NCES will be tracking performance against percentages, such as maintaining customer satisfaction levels of 90 percent or more.

Organization of this Report

The chapters that follow are:

- Questions About You, Our Customer
- Questions About NCES Publications and Reports
- Questions About NCES Data Files
- Questions About NCES Services
- Questions About Benchmark Organizations
- Questions for Non-Users
- Conclusions

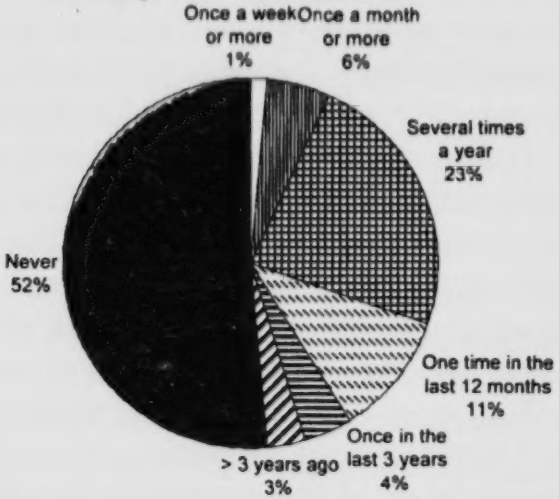
These chapters are followed by four appendices:

- 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Methodology
- Weighted Number and Percent of Respondents for Selected Survey Items
- Open-ended Comment Categories

"How frequently have you used NCES products or services?"

Almost one-third of all customers had used NCES products or services at least several times a year (30%), while one-half (51%) had never used NCES products or services (see figure 4). (See appendix C, table 25, for the percentage distribution and weighted number of users of NCES products or services for each of the four customer groups.)

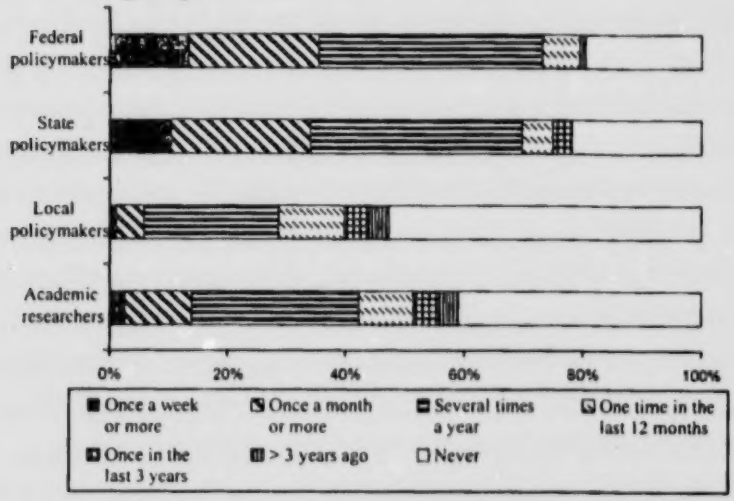
Figure 4.—Frequency with which customers use NCES products or services


Once a week or more 1%
Once a month or more 6%
Several times a year 23%
Never 52%
One time in the last 12 months 11%
Once in the last 3 years 4%
> 3 years ago 3%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Federal and state customers were the most frequent users (see figure 5). Two-thirds or more of federal customers (73%) and state customers (70%) used NCES products or services at least several times a year.

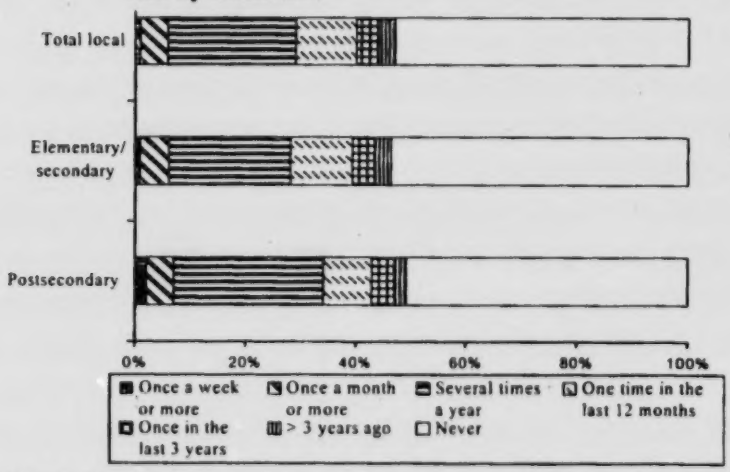
Figure 5.—Frequency with which customers use NCES products or services, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Among local policymakers (see figure 6), individuals affiliated with postsecondary institutions were more frequent users than those affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts: 34 percent versus 28 percent, respectively, using NCES products or services at least several times a year.

Figure 6.—Frequency with which local policymakers use NCES products or services, total and by affiliation

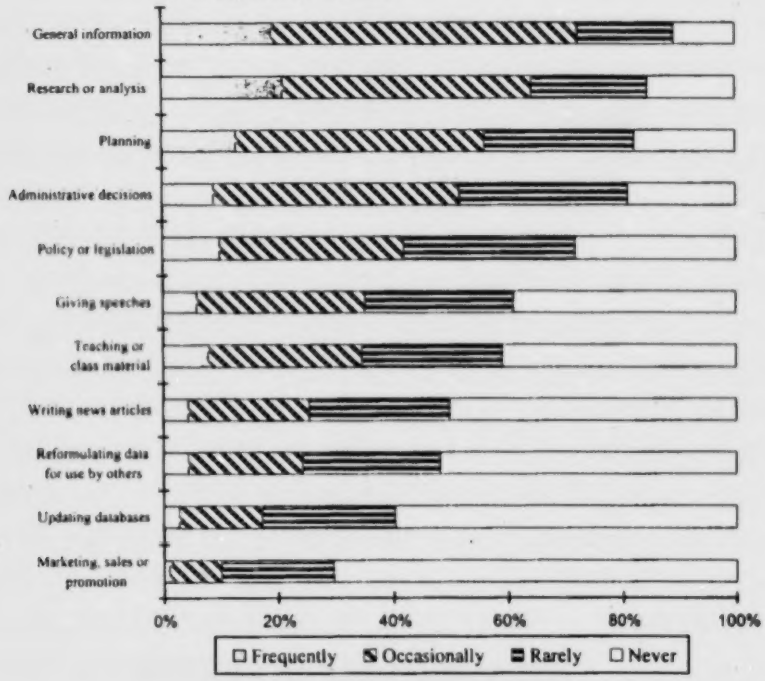


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"For what purposes have you used NCES data?"

The top four purposes that customers cited for using NCES data frequently or occasionally were general information (72%), research or analysis (64%), planning (56%), and administrative decisions (52%). (See figure 7.)

Figure 7.—Customers' reasons for using NCES data, by frequency of use



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Not surprisingly, the purposes varied by customer group, although general information was the top purpose in three of the four groups. The following are the top three uses by customer group:

Federal policymakers:	*Percent*
○ Research or analysis	76
○ Policy or legislation	73
○ General information	72

State policymakers:	*Percent*
○ General information	88
○ Research or analysis	87
○ Policy or legislation	76

Local policymakers:	*Percent*
• General information	72
• Research or analysis	63
• Planning	56

Note: This order is the same for both local policymakers affiliated with postsecondary institutions and local policymakers affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts.

Academic researchers:	*Percent*
• General information	76
• Research or analysis	73
• Teaching or class material	61

"How did you find out about NCES publications and data products?"

Overall, the top two means of learning about NCES publications and data products were the mail (84%) and other NCES publications (76%).

These were the top two means for all four customer groups. Beyond these two, however, means of learning about NCES products varied among the customer groups (see table 1). For example, state and local policymakers and academic researchers were more likely than federal policymakers to use professional associations and journal articles. Federal and state policymakers were more likely than local policymakers and academic researchers to use ongoing contact with NCES staff. State policymakers were more likely to use conferences, colleagues, Internet, product announcements, and NCES publications than were the other customer segments.

Table 1.—Means of finding out about NCES products and services, by customer group (percent)

Found out from	Overall	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
Received in the mail	84	65	92	84	75
NCES publications	76	73	91	75	74
Journal articles	49	17	48	49	49
Colleagues	47	56	73	45	58
Professional associations	44	17	54	44	53
Product announcements	28	41	60	26	33
Conferences	26	9	57	25	36
Internet	16	31	51	14	26
Ongoing contact with NCES staff	9	42	48	7	12

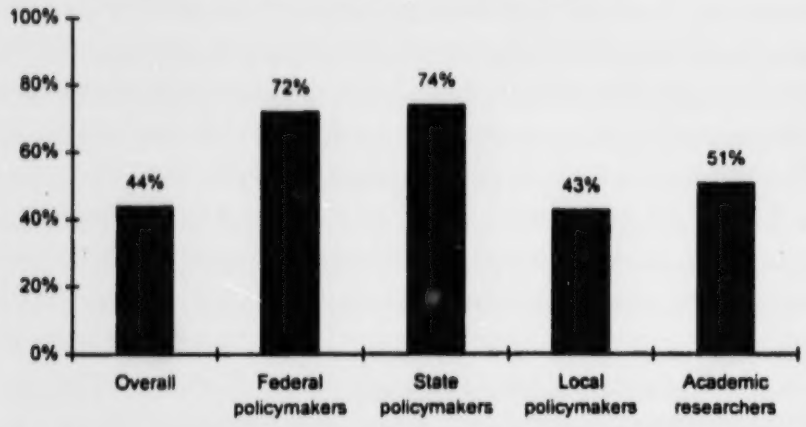
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

III. Questions About NCES Publications and Reports

"Have you used publications or reports from NCES in the past 3 years?"

Less than half of the customers (44%) had used NCES publications or reports in the past 3 years. (See appendix C, table 26, for the percentage distribution and weighted numbers of users of NCES publications and reports for each of the four customer groups.) Usage varied among the customer groups. As figure 8 shows, usage was above 70 percent for both federal and state policymakers whereas local policymakers had the lowest usage rate. Approximately half of the academic researchers indicated that they had used NCES publications or reports during the past 3 years.

Figure 8.—Usage of NCES publications and reports in the past 3 years, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"Why have you not used NCES publications or reports?"

The 56 percent of customers who had not used NCES publications or reports in the past 3 years were asked to indicate all of the reasons why they had not used them. Customers indicated the following reasons for not using NCES publications or reports (see table 2):

- Not aware of NCES publications or reports (59%)
- Work does not require use of NCES publications or reports (40%)
- NCES publications or reports are not relevant (32%)
- Other responses (specified separately) (21%)
- NCES publications or reports are outdated (5%)

The reason cited most frequently by customers for not using NCES publications or reports was that they were not aware of these products (59%).

Table 2 also shows the reasons customers gave for not using NCES publications or reports in the past 3 years, by customer group.

Table 2.—Reasons for not using NCES publications and reports in the past 3 years, by customer group (percent)

Reason	Total	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
Work does not require use of NCES pubs. or reports	40	41	38	39	48
NCES pubs. or reports are not relevant	32	29	21	33	22
NCES pubs. or reports are outdated	5	3	7	5	3
Not aware of NCES pubs. or reports	59	32	59	59	50

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Twenty-one percent of customers who had not used NCES publications or reports provided additional reasons why they had not. The reasons fell into the following broad categories:

- Too busy to read NCES publications and reports (21%)
- Use other sources of education data (18%)
- NCES publications and reports are not needed (14%)
- Want different levels of analysis (14%)
- Not aware of/never used NCES publications and reports (9%)
- Other staff use them (7%)
- Have new position (7%)
- NCES publications and reports are too expensive (6%)
- Other (4%)

See appendix D for detailed open-ended subcategories with corresponding percentages.

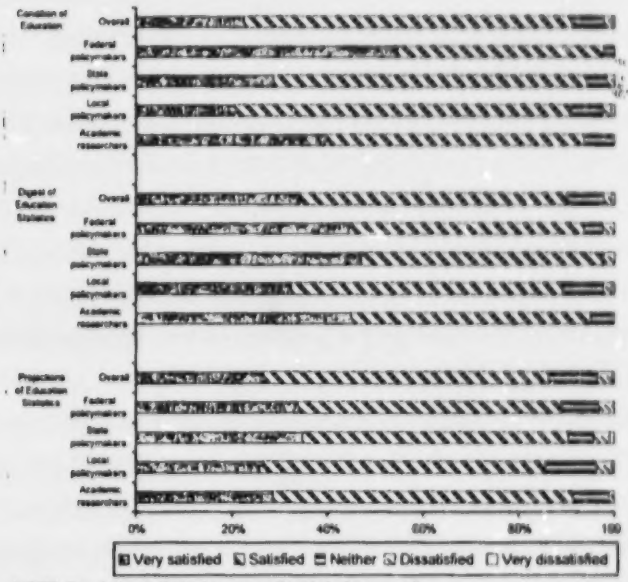
"How satisfied were you with NCES statistical compendia?"

Of those who had used NCES statistical compendia, a high percentage of customers expressed satisfaction:

- Condition of Education (91%)
- Digest of Education Statistics (90%)
- Projections of Education Statistics (86%)

Although satisfaction with these compendia was high across all four customer groups, local policymakers (the largest group of users) consistently had slightly lower percentages of satisfaction (ranging from 86% to 91%) compared to the other three groups (ranging from 89% to 98%). And among the local policymakers, users in postsecondary institutions consistently had slightly higher satisfaction levels (ranging from 90% to 95%) compared to those in elementary and secondary school districts (ranging from 85% to 91%). As figure 9 shows, more of the customers were satisfied (56%-69%) than were very satisfied (23%-34%).

Figure 9.—Users' levels of satisfaction with specific NCES statistical compendia, by customer group



NOTE: Population is limited to users of statistical compendia.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"How satisfied were you with NCES publications and reports in the following areas?"

Satisfaction ratings among users varied by program area of publications and reports, although most users reported being either very satisfied or satisfied.

Publications which had the highest reported use during the past 3 years also had high satisfaction levels (see table 3).

Dissatisfaction levels were low for all program areas, ranging from 1 percent to 5 percent.

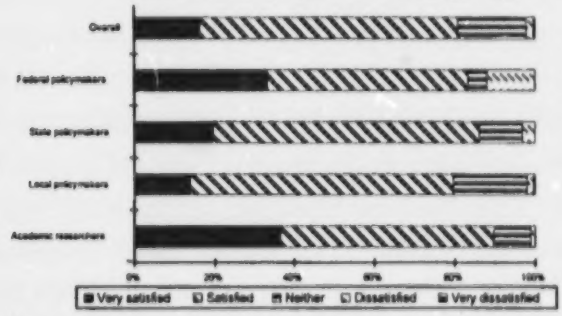
Table 3.—Users' levels of satisfaction with NCES publications and reports, by program area (percent)

Program area	Very satisfied/ satisfied	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	Very dissatisfied/ dissatisfied	Not used in the past 3 years
Educational assessment	93	6	2	21
Other publications	91	8	1	51
Elementary & secondary education	90	9	1	33
Postsecondary education	84	14	2	68
National longitudinal studies	81	17	2	62
Library data	72	24	5	79

NOTE: Estimates based on those reporting any use of NCES publications and reports.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Levels of satisfaction varied by customer group. See figure 10 for an illustration of ratings by customer group on publications in the national longitudinal studies area. Ninety percent of academic researchers were very satisfied or satisfied compared to 80 percent of local policymakers who expressed satisfaction with publications in the longitudinal studies area.

Figure 10.—Users' levels of satisfaction with NCES publications and reports in the longitudinal studies area, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Table 4 reflects the percentage of each customer group who were very satisfied or satisfied with publications and reports, by program area.

Table 4.—Users *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with NCES publications and reports, by customer group and program area (percent)

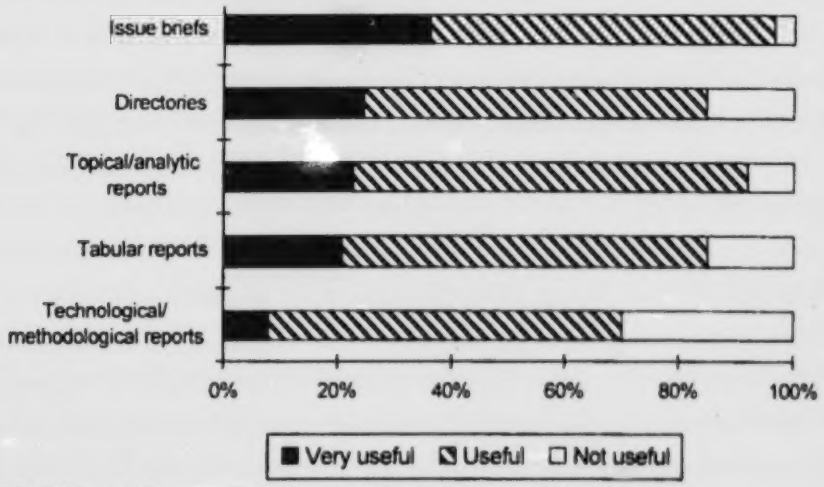
Program area	Total	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
Educational assessment	93	95	89	93	92
Other publications	91	92	92	92	81
Elementary & secondary education	90	94	89	90	92
Postsecondary education	84	88	88	82	92
National longitudinal studies	81	83	86	80	90
Library data	72	85	81	72	61

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Users gave high marks for usefulness of NCES publication and report formats (see figure 11):

- Issue briefs (97%)
- Topical or analytic reports (92%)
- Directories (85%)
- Tabular reports (85%)
- Technical or methodological reports (70%)

Figure 11.—Reported usefulness of NCES publications and reports, by report format



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"Overall, how satisfied were you with the following aspects of the NCES publications and reports that you have used?"

A very high percentage of customers reported satisfaction with specific aspects of NCES publications and reports. Eighty-five percent or more were very satisfied or satisfied with:

- Overall quality of reports (90%)
- Comprehensiveness (88%)
- Clarity of writing (87%)
- Usefulness to work (86%)

Satisfaction ratings were lower for accuracy (80%) and timeliness of information (72%). Dissatisfaction levels were highest for timeliness (17%), while 5 percent or less of customers expressed dissatisfaction with each of the other five aspects.

Table 5 presents customer satisfaction with six aspects of the NCES publications and reports they have used.

Table 5.—Users' levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of NCES publications and reports (percent)

Aspect	Very satisfied/ satisfied	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	Very dissatisfied/ dissatisfied
Comprehensiveness	88	9	3
Clarity of writing	87	9	4
Timeliness of information	72	11	17
Accuracy	80	19	2
Usefulness to work	86	10	5
Overall quality of reports	90	8	2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"Which aspects of NCES publications and reports do you consider to be the three most important?"

Customers were also asked to rank the three aspects of NCES publications and reports which they considered to be most important among the following choices:

- Comprehensiveness
- Clarity of writing
- Timeliness of information
- Accuracy

Table 6 shows the percentage distribution of the first, second, and third most important aspects of NCES publications and reports. Thirty-nine percent of users rated accuracy of the information as the *first most important* aspect, followed by timeliness of information (33%) and comprehensiveness (17%). In addition, 90 percent of users rated accuracy as either their first, second, or third most important aspect, followed by timeliness (80%), comprehensiveness (65%), and clarity of writing (64%). The high percentage of users ranking timeliness as important is especially meaningful, given that users of publications and reports rated this aspect lowest in satisfaction (72% very satisfied/satisfied, 17% very dissatisfied/dissatisfied).

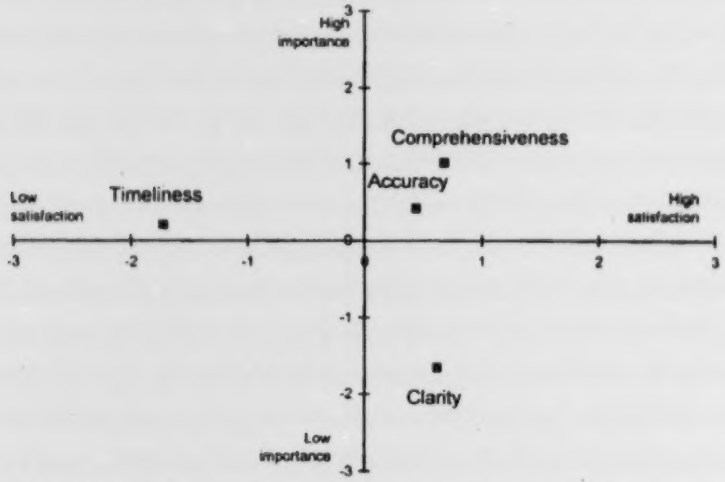
Table 6.—Users' ranking of three most important aspects of NCES publications and reports (percent)

Aspect	First most important	Second most important	Third most important	Either first, second, or third most important
Accuracy	39	33	18	90
Timeliness of information	33	29	19	80
Comprehensiveness	17	18	30	65
Clarity of writing	10	21	33	64

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Figure 12 compares ratings of the *importance* of an aspect to the levels of *satisfaction* with the aspect.

Figure 12.—Comparison of levels of satisfaction vs. importance for aspects of NCES publications and reports



NOTE: The scale is normalized so that the mean is equal to 0 (center of chart) and the variance is equal to 1.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The upper right quadrant reflects aspects with high importance and high satisfaction. Included are comprehensiveness and accuracy. Clarity of writing, which appears in the lower right quadrant, reflects low importance and high satisfaction. *The upper left quadrant reflects aspects with high importance and low satisfaction; the only aspect in this quadrant is timeliness of information.*

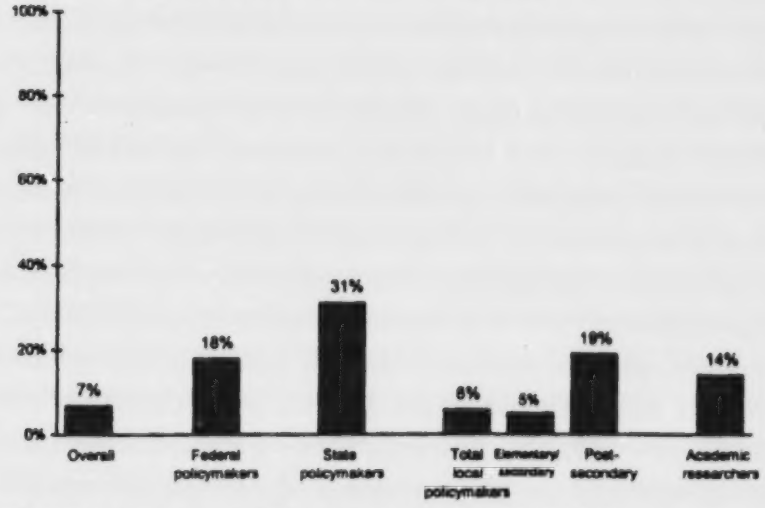
IV. Questions About NCES Data Files

"Have you used any NCES electronic data files in the past 3 years?"

Overall, a very low percentage (7%) of customers had used NCES electronic data files, although usage varied by customer group (see figure 13). (See appendix C, table 27, for the percentage distribution and weighted numbers of users of NCES data files for each of the four customer groups.)

State policymakers reported the highest use of NCES data files (31%), while local policymakers reported the lowest use (6%). Data file use varied considerably within the local policymakers group: only 5 percent of individuals affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts had used NCES data files within the past 3 years, while approximately 19 percent of those affiliated with postsecondary institutions were NCES data file users.

Figure 13.—Usage of NCES electronic data files in the past 3 years, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"What are the reasons why you have not used NCES electronic data files in the past 3 years?"

The 93 percent of customers who had not used NCES data files in the past 3 years were asked to indicate the reasons for not using them. Reasons why customers had not used NCES data files include the following:

- Not aware of NCES electronic data files (62%)
- Prefer written format (44%)
- Someone else on staff is responsible for data files (37%)
- Don't need NCES data files to get information (32%)
- Electronic data files are not relevant (22%)
- Electronic data files are hard or clumsy to use (17%)
- Electronic data files are outdated (4%)

As with NCES publications and reports, the reason given most frequently for not using data files was that the customer was not aware of them (62%).

Table 7 shows the reasons customers cited for not using NCES electronic data files, by customer group.

Table 7.—Reasons for not using NCES electronic data files in the past 3 years, by customer group (percent)

Reason	Total	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
Someone else on staff is responsible for data files	37	29	49	36	42
Prefer written format	44	48	30	45	41
Electronic data files are hard or clumsy to use	17	20	18	17	16
Don't need NCES data files to get information	32	29	28	32	35
Electronic data files are not relevant	22	15	16	22	13
Electronic data files are outdated	4	2	7	4	2
Not aware of NCES electronic data files	62	27	41	63	50

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Sixteen percent of those who had not used NCES data files provided additional answers as to why they had not used the data files. The most frequently cited category of response was computer limitations (43%), which encompassed lack of technology in the office, no connection to the Internet, and incompatible formats. Another 10 percent of customers were too busy to use data files. See appendix D for detailed open-ended comment subcategories and corresponding response percentages.

"How satisfied were you with the following NCES electronic data files?"

All of the elementary and secondary education data files (CCD, NHES, SASS, SDDB), as well as NAEP and HS&B, received satisfaction ratings from 91 percent or more of customers who had used them. The tendency reported in the preceding section on publications—high use related to high satisfaction levels—held across all data files. Most users were either satisfied or very satisfied with NCES electronic data files, within a range of 67 percent to 95 percent, as shown in table 8.

Table 8.—Percentage of users *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with NCES electronic data files and total number of users, by program area

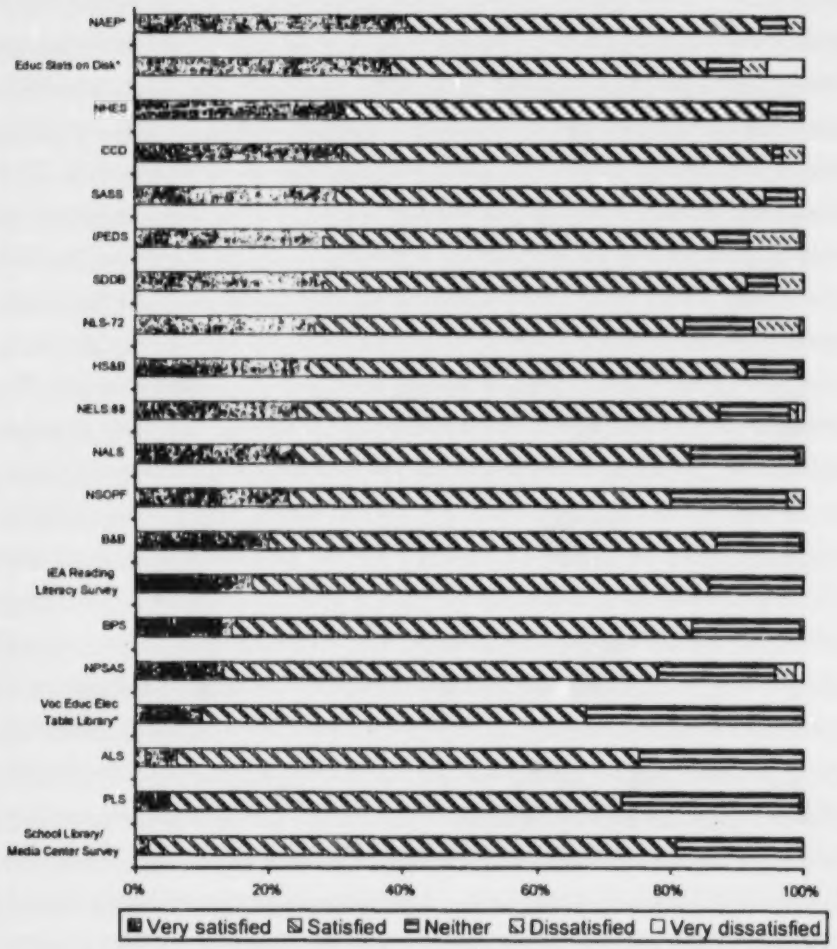
Program area	Satisfaction	# of users
Elementary and Secondary Education		
Common Core of Data (CCD)	95%	565
National Household Education Survey (NHES)	95%	360
Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)	94%	569
School District Data Book (SDDB)	91%	583
Postsecondary Education		
Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)	87%	692
Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B)	87%	312
Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (BPS)	83%	396
National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF)	80%	290
National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)	78%	312
Educational Assessment		
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*	93%	850
National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS)	83%	405
National Longitudinal Studies (multi-level)		
High School and Beyond (HS&B)	92%	553
National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88)	87%	570
National Longitudinal Study of 1972 (NLS-72)	82%	372
Library Statistics Program		
School Library/Media Center Survey	81%	267
Academic Library Survey (ALS)	75%	199
Public Library Survey (PLS)	73%	179
Other Data Files		
Education Statistics on Disk*	86%	499
IEA Reading Literacy Survey	86%	348
Vocational Education Electronic Table Library*	67%	211

* These data files are compendia of statistical tables. Although raw data are also available for NAEP, the compendium of tables is primarily used.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Overall, dissatisfaction levels were very low (see figure 14). Eleven—just over half—of the 20 data files had customer dissatisfaction levels (very dissatisfied and dissatisfied) of 1 percent or less, with no dissatisfaction expressed for 4 of the data files. Although the Vocational Education Electronic Table Library data file received the lowest satisfaction rating (67%), no user expressed dissatisfaction; the remaining 33 percent of users indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 14.—Users' levels of satisfaction with specific NCES electronic data files



* These data files are compendia of statistical tables. Although raw data are also available for NAEP, the compendium of tables is primarily used.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"Overall, how satisfied were you with the following aspects of NCES electronic data files that you have used?"

Usage and satisfaction ratings varied across programs and among customer groups. Table 9 shows the three data files used most by each customer group and their corresponding satisfaction rating.

Table 9.—Top three NCES data files used and percentage of users *very satisfied* or *satisfied*, by customer group

Customer group	Usage	Satisfaction
Federal policymakers		
NAEP	41%	100%
SASS	37%	100%
CCD	34%	87%
State policymakers		
IPEDS	63%	90%
Ed Statistics on Disk	53%	88%
NAEP	38%	87%
Local policymakers		
NAEP	63%	94%
SDDB	55%	93%
IPEDS	48%	85%
Academic researchers		
SDDB	64%	86%
IPEDS	58%	100%
NAEP	54%	94%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Data file users were asked how satisfied they were with six aspects of NCES electronic data files. Their levels of satisfaction are shown in table 10.

Table 10.—Users' levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of NCES electronic data files (percent)

Aspect	Very satisfied/ satisfied	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	Very dissatisfied/ dissatisfied
Comprehensiveness	82	14	4
Accuracy of data in the file	74	25	2
File documentation	70	23	7
Ease of use	69	15	16
User interface	55	35	10
Timeliness of file release	52	23	25

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

In responses similar to those concerning NCES publications and reports, users were most dissatisfied with the timeliness of file release (25%).

"Which aspects of NCES electronic data files do you consider to be the three most important?"

Data file users were also asked to rank the three aspects of data files which they considered to be most important, from among the following:

- Comprehensiveness of data in the file
- Ease of use
- User interface, for example, the Electronic Code Book (ECB) and the Data Analysis System (DAS)
- File documentation
- Accuracy of data in the file
- Timeliness of file release

Table 11 shows the percentage distribution of the first, second, and third most important aspects of electronic data files. The largest percentage of users ranked accuracy of the information (40%) as the *first most important* aspect, followed by a virtual tie between timeliness of file release (21%) and ease of use (20%). In addition, 84 percent rated accuracy of data in the file as either the first, second, or third most important aspect of NCES data files, followed by timeliness (64%) and ease of use (55%). This is especially meaningful given that users were most dissatisfied with timeliness (25%), followed by ease of use (16%).

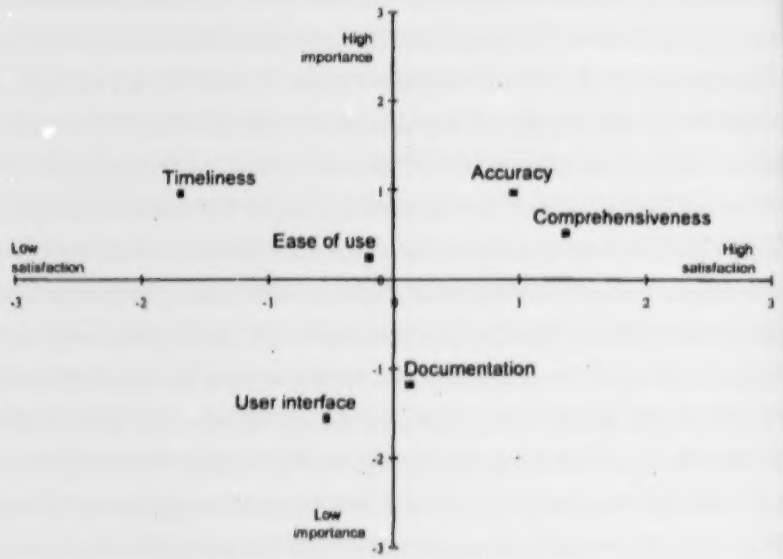
Table 11.—Users' ranking of three most important aspects of NCES electronic data files (percent)

Aspect	First most important	Second most important	Third most important	Either first, second, or third most important
Accuracy of data in the file	40	30	14	84
Timeliness of file release	21	25	18	64
Ease of use	20	14	21	55
Comprehensiveness	16	17	20	33
File documentation	3	4	15	22
User interface	2	11	9	22

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Figure 15 compares ratings of the *importance* of an aspect with the levels of *satisfaction* with the aspect.

Figure 15.—Comparison of levels of satisfaction vs. importance for aspects of NCES electronic data files



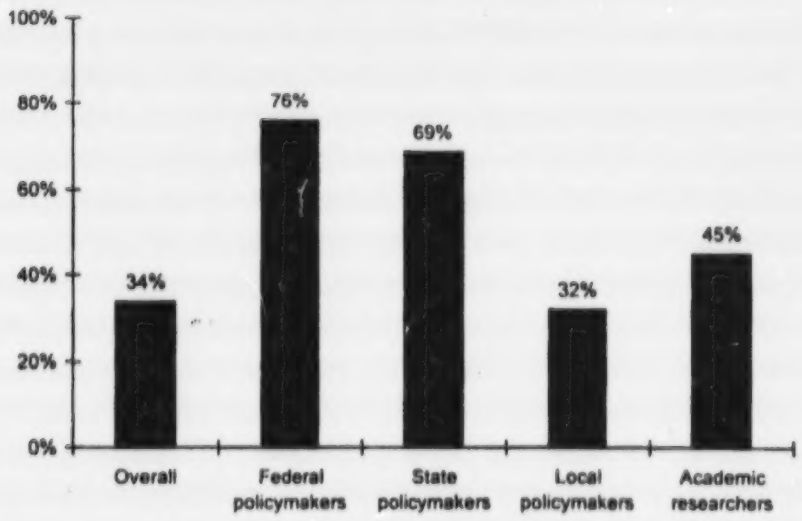
NOTE: In the chart above, the scale is normalized so that the mean is equal to 0 and the variance is equal to 1.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The upper right quadrant reflects aspects with high importance and high satisfaction. Included in this quadrant are accuracy and comprehensiveness of data in the file. File documentation is in the lower right quadrant, which reflects low importance and high satisfaction. User interface appears in the lower left quadrant, which reflects low importance and low satisfaction. *The upper left quadrant reflects aspects with high importance and low satisfaction; included in this quadrant are timeliness of file release and ease of use.*

"If you have a question, do you know how to contact NCES?"

Overall, only 34 percent of all customers knew how to contact NCES. This was heavily influenced by the large group of local policymakers, only 32 percent of whom said they knew how to contact NCES. However, three-fourths of federal policymakers (76%) and about two-thirds of state policymakers (69%) knew how to contact NCES (see figure 16). (See appendix C, table 28, for the percentage distribution and weighted number of users of NCES services for each of the four customer groups.)

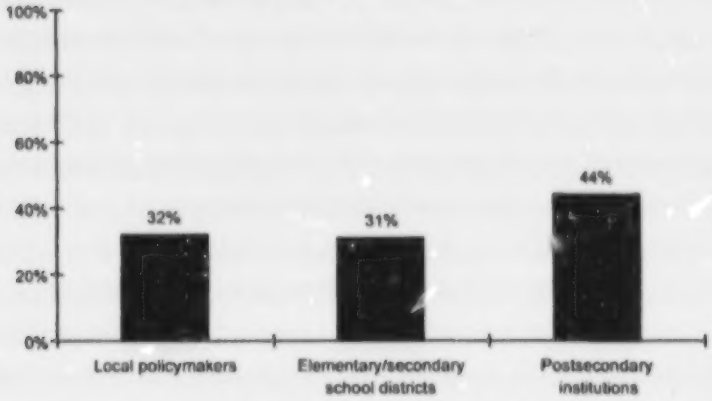
Figure 16.—Customers who know how to contact NCES, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Among the local policymakers (see figure 17), individuals affiliated with postsecondary institutions (44%) were more knowledgeable about how to contact NCES than those affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts (31%).

Figure 17.—Local policymakers who know how to contact NCES, by affiliation

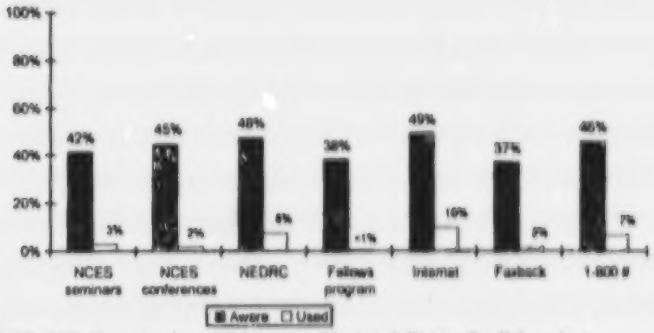


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"Which NCES services are you aware of and which services have you used?"

Close to 40 percent of all customers were aware of each of the services that NCES offers (see figure 18), although some services were better known than others. For example, close to half of the customers were aware of the NCES Internet site (49%) and the National Education Data Resource Center (NEDRC) (48%), but awareness of the Fellows program and Faxback was below 40 percent (38% and 37%, respectively). There was more variation in the percentage of customers who had used a particular service. While one-tenth had visited the NCES site on the Internet, only a very small percentage had participated in the Fellows program (less than 1 percent), used Faxback (2%), or attended an NCES conference (2%).

Figure 18.—Awareness and usage of specific NCES services



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Awareness rates and usage rates varied among the customer groups (see table 12). Overall, state policymakers had the highest awareness levels: more than half reported awareness of six of the seven NCES services. At least half of the federal policymakers were aware of four of the services, half of the academic researchers were aware of three, and close to half of the local policymakers were aware of two.

State policymakers also had the highest usage levels. At least one-fifth of state policymakers had used four of the seven services, while for federal policymakers and academic researchers this was true for only one service. One-tenth or fewer of local policymakers had used any of the NCES services.

The NCES Internet site was one of the most widely used services in each of the four customer groups. Almost half of state policymakers (47%), close to 40 percent of federal policymakers (38%), approximately one-fifth of academic researchers (19%), and close to one-tenth of local policymakers (9%) had accessed the NCES Internet site. Among local policymakers, almost one-quarter of users affiliated with postsecondary institutions (24%) had accessed the NCES site, while less than one-tenth of those affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts (7%) had done so.

Table 12.—Awareness and usage of specific NCES services, by customer group (percent)

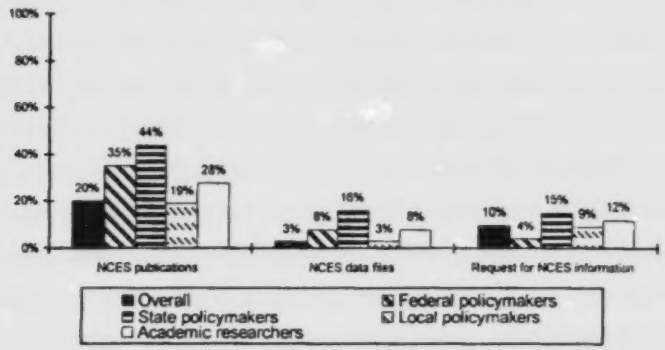
	NCES seminars	NCES conferences	NEDRC	Fellows program	Internet	Faxback	1-800 #
Federal policymakers							
Aware	56	58	47	37	76	41	61
Used	11	11	12	0	38	0	13
State policymakers							
Aware	67	71	58	54	75	43	62
Used	30	32	18	6	47	4	20
Local policymakers							
Aware	41	44	47	38	48	37	45
Used	2	1	7	0	9	2	6
Elementary/secondary							
Aware	41	44	47	38	47	37	45
Used	2	1	7	<1	7	2	6
Postsecondary							
Aware	45	45	45	38	54	36	47
Used	5	1	8	1	24	1	10
Academic researchers							
Aware	44	46	53	42	58	45	54
Used	5	2	10	1	19	3	9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"Have you ordered NCES publications or electronic data files, or mailed a request for NCES information in the past 3 years?"

As figure 19 indicates, the customer groups most likely to have ordered NCES publications were state (44%) and federal (35%) policymakers and academic researchers (28%). State policymakers (16%) were the most likely to have ordered NCES electronic data files. State policymakers (15%), academic researchers (12%), and local policymakers (9%) were more likely than federal policymakers (4%) to have mailed a request for NCES information.

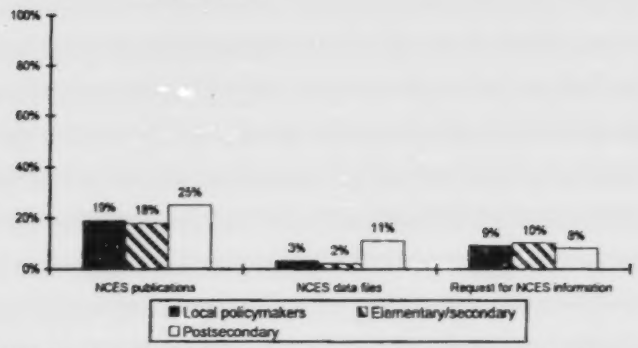
Figure 19.—Usage of specific NCES services in the past 3 years, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Among the local policymakers (see figure 20), users affiliated with postsecondary institutions were more likely to have ordered NCES publications (25%) and electronic data files (11%) than those affiliated with elementary and secondary school districts (18% and 2%, respectively). However, both groups mailed requests for information at similar rates (8% and 10%, respectively).

Figure 20.—Local policymakers' usage of specific NCES services in the past 3 years, by affiliation

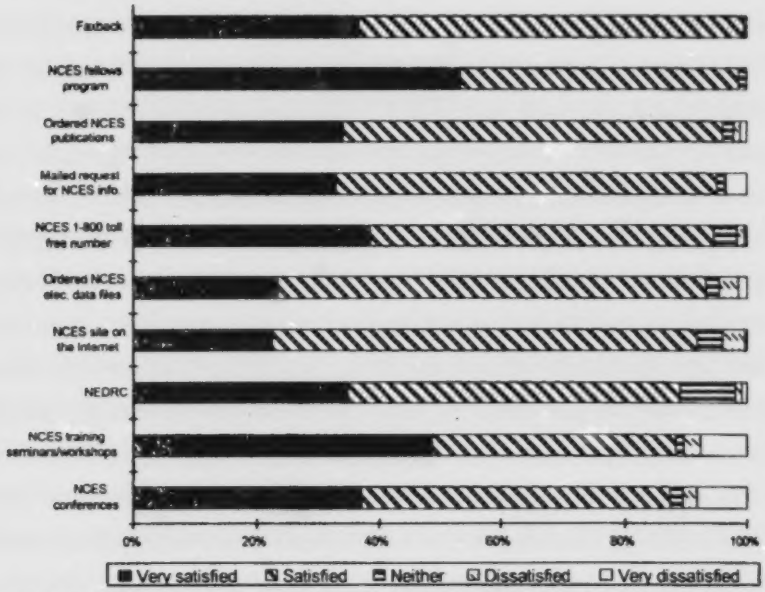


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

"How satisfied were you with the following NCES services?"

Satisfaction was high for all of the services used by customers. It ranged from 88 percent for NCES seminars/workshops and conferences to nearly 100 percent for Faxback (see figure 21). Dissatisfaction across each of the services was never higher than 10 percent.

Figure 21.—Users' levels of satisfaction with specific NCES services



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The three services which received the highest dissatisfaction ratings from each customer group are the following:

Federal policymakers:

- Seminars and workshops (18%)
- Ordering electronic data files (10%)
- Toll free number (9%)
- Faxback (9%)

State policymakers:

- Internet site (10%)
- Seminars and workshops (9%)
- Faxback (9%)

Local policymakers:

- Conferences (14%)
- Seminars and workshops (11%)
- Ordering electronic data files (5%)

Academic researchers:

- Seminars and workshops (10%)
- Toll free number (9%)
- NEDRC (6%)

"How satisfied were you with the following aspects of NCES services?"

A high percentage of customers were very satisfied or satisfied with these service aspects (see table 13):

- Extent to which the information met needs (92%)
- Ease of obtaining the information (92%)
- Courtesy of staff (90%)
- Speed with which the information was received (89%)

Fewer were satisfied with staff expertise (85%), the time it took them to reach knowledgeable staff (84%), and the handling of complaints (75%). Overall, frequent users expressed higher levels of satisfaction (81%-94%) than occasional users (66%-89%).

Dissatisfaction levels of close to 10 percent were expressed by several customer groups. Federal policymakers were dissatisfied with the time needed to reach knowledgeable staff (11%) and the ease of obtaining information (10%). State policymakers expressed greatest dissatisfaction with the speed with which they received information (13%), the time needed to reach knowledgeable staff (11%), and the ease of obtaining information (8%). Academic researchers expressed dissatisfaction with the time needed to reach knowledgeable staff (9%) and the ease of obtaining information (8%). Local policymakers overall expressed no levels of dissatisfaction above 5 percent. However, approximately one-tenth of users affiliated with postsecondary institutions were dissatisfied with the time needed to reach knowledgeable staff (13%), the ease of obtaining information (10%), the speed with which they received information (10%), the extent to which the information met their needs (9%), and the handling of complaints (9%).

Table 13.—Users' levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of NCES services, by customer group (percent)

	Very satisfied/ satisfied	Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	Very dissatisfied/ dissatisfied
Extent to which the information met needs			
Overall	92	5	4
Federal policymakers	95	2	3
State policymakers	94	3	3
Local policymakers	91	5	4
Elementary/secondary	92	5	3
Postsecondary	87	4	9
Academic researchers	93	4	2
Speed with which information was received			
Overall	89	6	5
Federal policymakers	91	6	3
State policymakers	82	5	13
Local policymakers	89	6	5
Elementary/secondary	89	7	4
Postsecondary	87	3	10
Academic researchers	90	5	5
Ease of obtaining the information			
Overall	92	3	5
Federal policymakers	86	4	10
State policymakers	87	5	8
Local policymakers	93	3	4
Elementary/secondary	95	2	3
Postsecondary	82	7	10
Academic researchers	89	3	8
Staff expertise			
Overall	85	12	3
Federal policymakers	92	6	1
State policymakers	92	7	1
Local policymakers	85	12	3
Elementary/secondary	85	11	3
Postsecondary	83	16	1
Academic researchers	82	15	3
Time needed to reach knowledgeable staff			
Overall	83	12	5
Federal policymakers	87	2	11
State policymakers	84	5	11
Local policymakers	84	12	4
Elementary/secondary	86	12	2
Postsecondary	74	13	13
Academic researchers	77	13	9
Courtesy of staff			
Overall	90	8	2
Federal policymakers	95	2	3
State policymakers	95	2	3
Local policymakers	90	9	2
Elementary/secondary	90	8	2
Postsecondary	89	9	2
Academic researchers	85	13	2
Handling of complaints			
Overall	75	20	5
Federal policymakers	92	5	3
State policymakers	81	14	6
Local policymakers	75	20	5
Elementary/secondary	77	19	4
Postsecondary	63	29	9
Academic researchers	68	28	4

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

VI. Questions About Benchmark Organizations

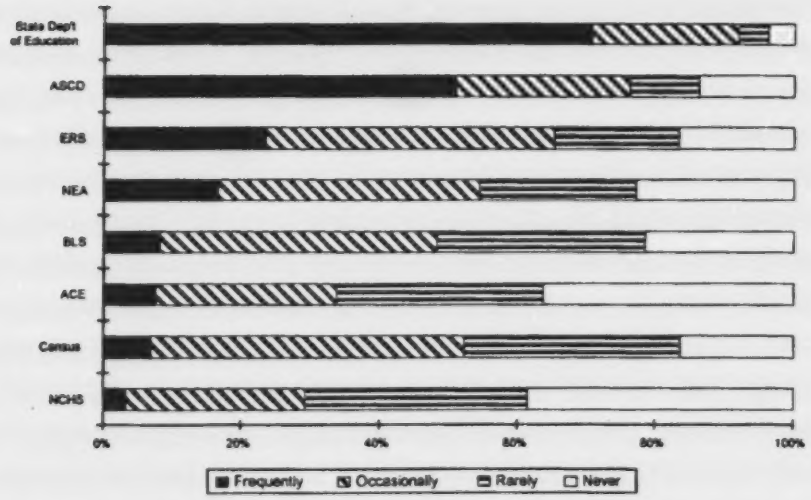
"How often have you obtained education data from an organization other than NCES in the last 3 years?"

This section of the questionnaire was only completed by users of NCES products and services (49% of all customers). Virtually all NCES users (99.5%) reported obtaining some education data from at least one organization other than NCES (either frequently, occasionally, or rarely).

- State Departments of Education (96%)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (86%)
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (Census) (84%)
- Educational Research Service (ERS) (83%)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (79%)
- National Education Association (NEA) (77%)
- American Council of Education (ACE) (64%)
- National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) (62%)
- Other organizations (60%)

As figure 22 shows, the percentages of NCES users reporting that they *frequently* used these other sources were generally much smaller than the percentages for overall use.

Figure 22.—Frequency with which NCES data users obtain education data from other specific organizations



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Still, 71 percent of NCES users were frequent users of data from their State Departments of Education, and 51 percent were frequent users of ASCD data. Usage varied by customer group. (See table 14.)

Table 14.—Usage of education data from organizations other than NCES, by NCES user group (percent)

	Total	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
Census	84	77	91	85	67
BLS	79	68	80	80	62
NCHS	62	35	46	63	46
ERS	83	50	59	86	68
NEA	77	67	68	78	70
ASCD	86	34	45	90	67
ACE	64	59	58	64	72
State Dept. of Education	96	78	94	97	88
Other organizations	60	54	52	61	55

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

State Departments of Education were the source of education data (other than NCES) reported most often by each of the customer groups. Usage ranged from 78 percent among federal policymakers to 97 percent among local policymakers (99% for users affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts and 84% for users affiliated with postsecondary institutions).

Many federal and state policymakers reported using education data from Census (federal—77%; state—91%), BLS (federal—68%; state—80%), and NEA (federal—67%; state—68%).

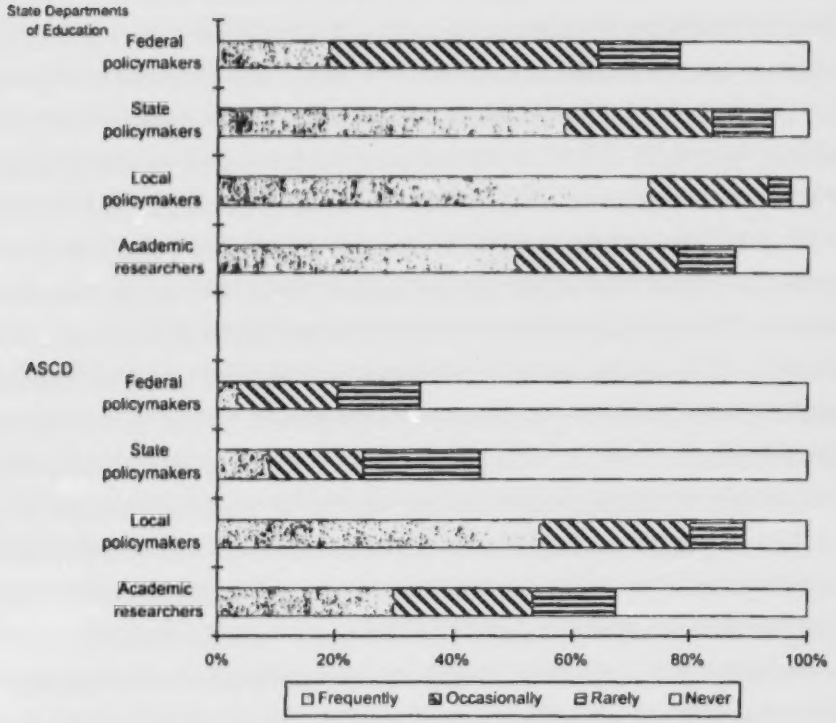
Among local policymakers overall, there was very high usage of data from ASCD (90%), ERS (86%), and Census (85%). Percentages were the same or higher for those affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts: ASCD (97%), ERS (90%), and Census (85%). Users affiliated with post-secondary institutions indicated heavy usage of Census (82%) and ACE (80%) data.

Large percentages of academic researchers reported using education data from ACE (72%), NEA (70%), ERS (68%), and Census (67%).

At least half of each customer group used all sources except ASCD and NCHS. Local policymakers affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts were the most likely to use education data from these two organizations (ASCD—97%; NCHS—67%).

For every customer group, *frequent* usage was considerably less than overall usage. Figure 23 shows that the only organizations used frequently by at least half of NCES users were State Departments of Education (all groups except federal policymakers) and ASCD (local policymakers).

Figure 23.—Frequency with which NCES data users obtain education data from State Departments of Education and ASCD, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Among local policymakers, only those affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts had a majority reporting frequent use of data from State Departments of Education and ASCD (78% and 61%, respectively). The corresponding

percentages for the postsecondary institution subgroup were 36 and 6 percent.

NCES users were also given the opportunity to identify additional organizations from which they had obtained education data during the last 3 years; about 60 percent did so. Up to three responses were coded for each individual, creating a list of well over 300 organizations. There was considerable variation by customer group.

- The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and Phi Delta Kappa were mentioned most frequently overall (15% and 7%, respectively).
- Federal policymakers most frequently cited the U.S. Department of Education (16%), presumably referring to agencies other than NCES.
- State policymakers cited the Education Commission of the States (11%).
- Among local policymakers, users affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts cited AASA (19%), and those affiliated with postsecondary institutions cited the Association for Institutional Research (14%).
- Academic researchers most frequently cited the American Association of College Teachers and Educators and the American Education Research Association (9% each).

"With which other source of education data are you most favorably impressed?"

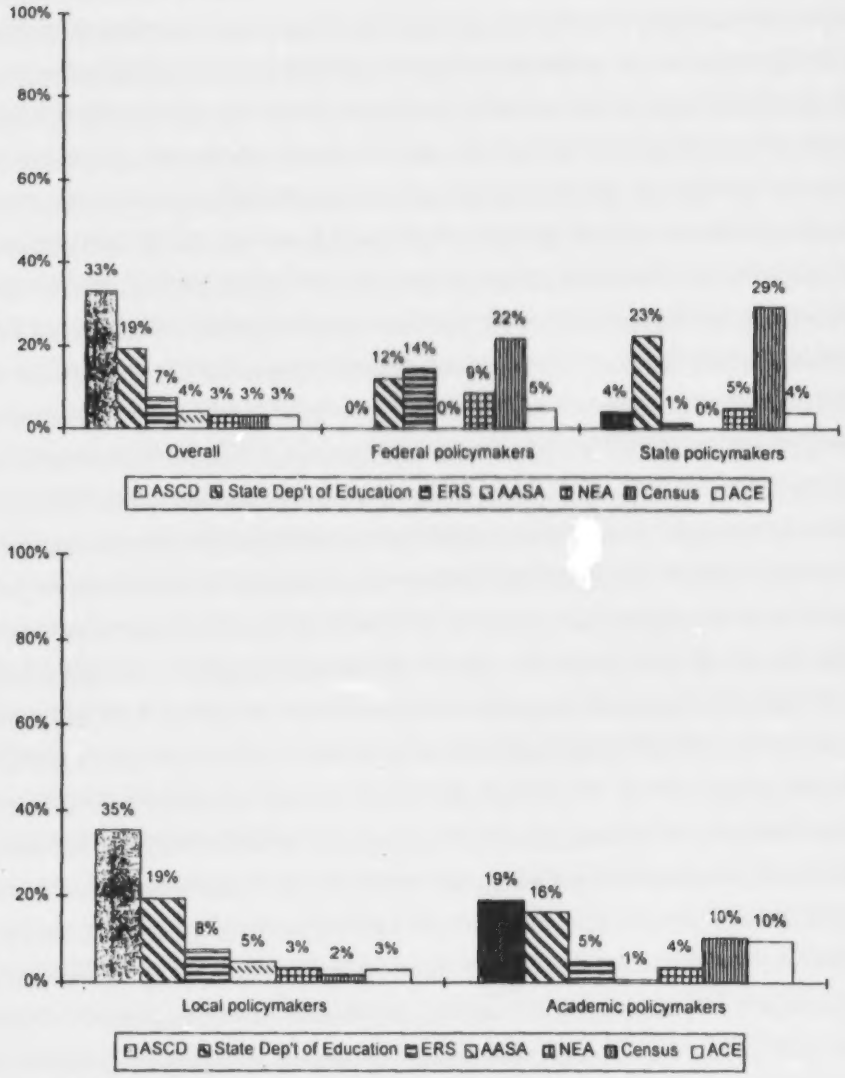
NCES users named well over 100 organizations when asked which organization (other than NCES) impressed them most favorably. The following nine organizations accounted for more than three-fourths of all responses.[1]

- ASCD (33%)
- State Departments of Education (19%)
- ERS (7%)
- AASA, NEA, Census, ACE, BLS, and Phi Delta Kappa (2-4% each)

[1] This analysis excludes such responses as "can't judge," "can't compare," "don't know," and "all are about the same." While less than 5 percent of users in most customer groups gave such responses, one-fifth of federal policymakers did so—a larger number than cited Census, their top-ranked organization (other than NCES).

As expected, results varied by customer group (see figure 24).

Figure 24.—Organizations with which NCES data users are most favorably impressed, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Both local policymakers and academic researchers reported ASCD and State Departments of Education as the two organizations (other than NCES) with which they were "most favorably impressed." Thirty-five percent of local

policymakers identified ASCD and 19 percent identified State Departments of Education. The corresponding percentages for academic researchers were 19 and 16 percent. The responses for the two subgroups of local policymakers reflect their different education interests. While the elementary/secondary subgroup was "most favorably impressed" with ASCD (39%) and State Departments of Education (19%), the postsecondary subgroup favored ACE (23%), State Departments of Education (19%), and Census (15%).

Census was the top choice among both federal and state policymakers (22% and 29%, respectively). State Departments of Education were second among state policymakers (23%).

"How would you compare the benchmark organization with NCES?"

Users were asked to rate the organization with which they were most favorably impressed (i.e., the benchmark organization) as "better" than, the "same" as, or "worse" than NCES on each of seven dimensions.[2] (See figure 25.)

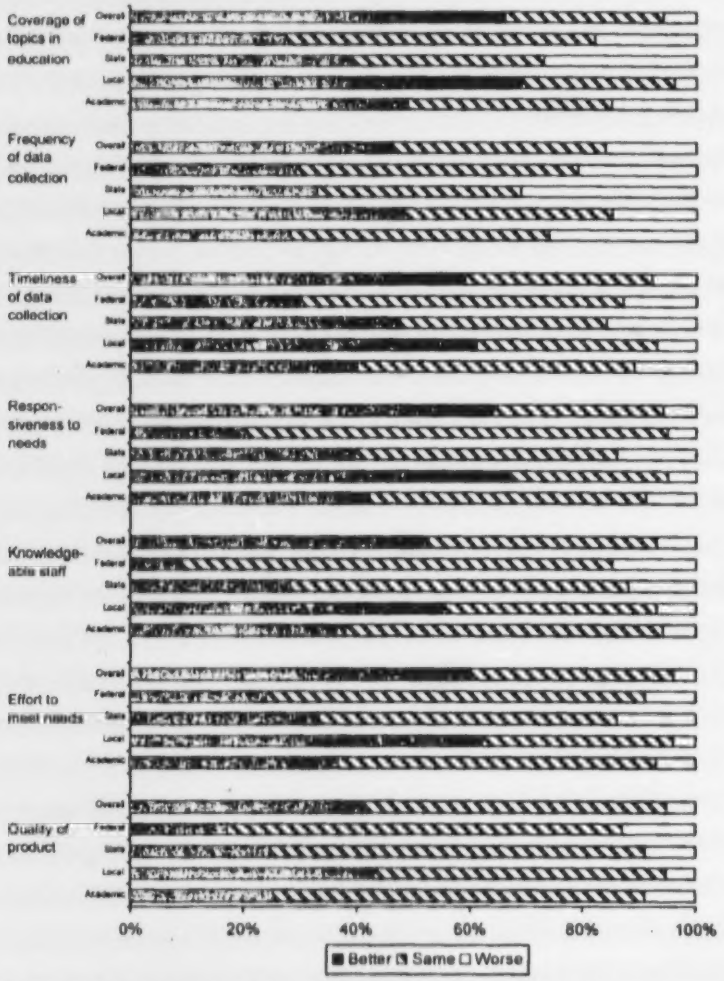
Overall, and among local policymakers, a majority of users gave "better" ratings to their benchmark organizations on all dimensions except quality of product and frequency of data collection. On these two dimensions, a majority considered their organization to be the "same" as or "worse" than NCES.

However, there was substantial variation by customer group. Federal policymakers viewed NCES the most favorably; 70 percent or more rated their benchmark organization the "same" as or "worse" than NCES on all seven dimensions. A majority of state policymakers and academic researchers thought likewise. On the other hand, over 60 percent of local policymakers rated their benchmark organization "better" than NCES on timeliness of data release, coverage of education topics relevant to their needs, responsiveness to their needs, and effort to meet their needs. The results for the last three

[2] This analysis is based on the total number of users who offered an opinion of "better," "same," or "worse." The two other response categories in this question ("don't know" and "not comparable") are excluded. It should be noted that these categories together account for a substantial share (23-47%) of all responses for each of the seven dimensions. This is especially true for knowledge of staff (a combined response of 47%), frequency of data collection (37%), and effort to meet your needs (30%).

dimensions—which are interrelated—most likely reflect the greater need of local policymakers for data on such topics as curriculum and development. Nearly half of academic researchers also regarded their benchmark organization as "better" than NCES on coverage of relevant education topics.

Figure 25.—Overall comparison of benchmark organizations with NCES, by aspect and customer group



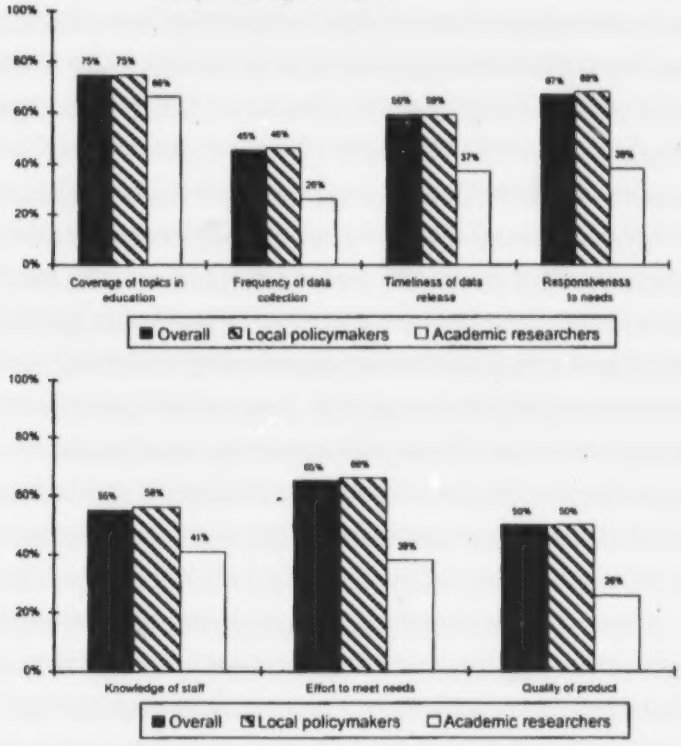
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The top two benchmark organizations—ASCD and the State Departments of Education—have been selected for comparison with NCES. As was seen in figure 24, ASCD

received the most responses as a benchmark organization (33%), followed by State Departments of Education (19%). Because NCES is particularly interested in improving customer service, the following comparisons focus on the areas perceived by users as "better" for the benchmark organization than for NCES.

Overall, ASCD received significantly higher marks than NCES on four of seven dimensions: coverage of relevant education topics (75% of users rating ASCD "better" than NCES), responsiveness to the user's needs (67%), effort to meet the user's needs (65%), and timeliness of data release (59%). (See figure 26.) The results for local policymakers were nearly identical. Two-thirds (66%) of academic researchers rated coverage of relevant education topics "better" for ASCD than for NCES.

Figure 26.—Comparison of ASCD with NCES, by aspect and customer group (percent responding *better*)*

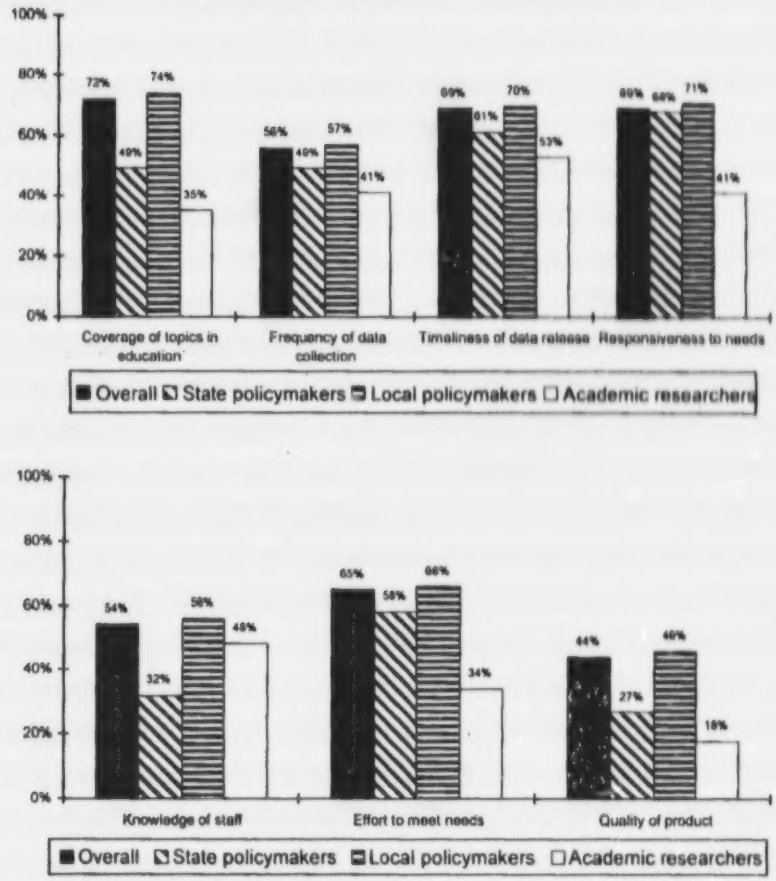


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

* There were too few federal and state policymakers to report.

State Departments of Education were perceived more favorably than NCES on the same four dimensions as observed for ASCD. (See figure 27.) Two-thirds or more of the users rated State Departments of Education "better" on coverage of relevant education topics (72%), timeliness of data release (69%), responsiveness to their needs (69%), and effort to meet their needs (65%). The perceptions of local policymakers were very similar and slightly higher. Two-thirds (68%) of state policymakers also rated State Departments of Education "better" on responsiveness to their needs.

Figure 27.—Comparison of State Departments of Education with NCES, by aspect and customer group (percent responding *better*)*



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

* There were too few federal policymakers to report.

"How can NCES better meet your needs? What problems have you experienced? How can NCES improve its products and services?"

In response to these questions, users of NCES products and services offered comments that addressed:

- Access/awareness (reported by 42% of users)
- Problems with products (26%)
- Data needs (17%)
- Expressions of satisfaction with NCES (13%)

Regarding access/awareness, NCES users most frequently cited the need to improve the awareness and marketing of NCES products and services (16%), closely followed by requests for information about NCES products and services (14%). Timeliness was by far the greatest problem with products—reported by 15 percent of NCES users. Most data needs were for more disaggregated statistics or more information on specific topics (11%). Several users requested that more data be broken down by rural/small school districts versus urban districts; by specific discipline or field; by level of education (particularly postsecondary); or by type of school (e.g., middle schools, single- and multiple-track year-round schools, high schools with block scheduling). Users also requested more data on specific topics, especially persistence and graduation rates, underprivileged and at-risk children, and teacher recruitment and retention. See appendix D for additional detail.

The emphasis on the issue areas differed by customer affiliation. Federal policymakers had the highest percentage indicating satisfaction and no problems. State policymakers expressed more than twice as many comments on timeliness as the other customer groups. Local policymakers and academic researchers expressed the greatest need to increase awareness and marketing of NCES products and services and the need to receive information about these products and services.

Federal policymakers:

- Satisfied/no problems (reported by 26% of users)
- Increase awareness/marketing (16%)
- Improve timeliness (15%)
- Reports too lengthy/produce research summaries (12%)
- Improve access to NCES products and services/mailing list problems/improve access to staff (12%)

State policymakers:

- Improve timeliness (reported by 42% of users)
- Satisfied/no problems (22%)
- Need other data/different stratification (state-by-state comparisons) (18%)
- Send information on NCES products and services (8%)
- Expand use of Internet/suggestions for Web improvements (7%)

Local policymakers:

- Increase awareness/marketing (reported by 22% of users)
- Improve timeliness (19%)
- Send information on NCES products and services (19%)
- Satisfied/no problems (15%)
- Need other data/different stratification (14%)

Academic researchers:

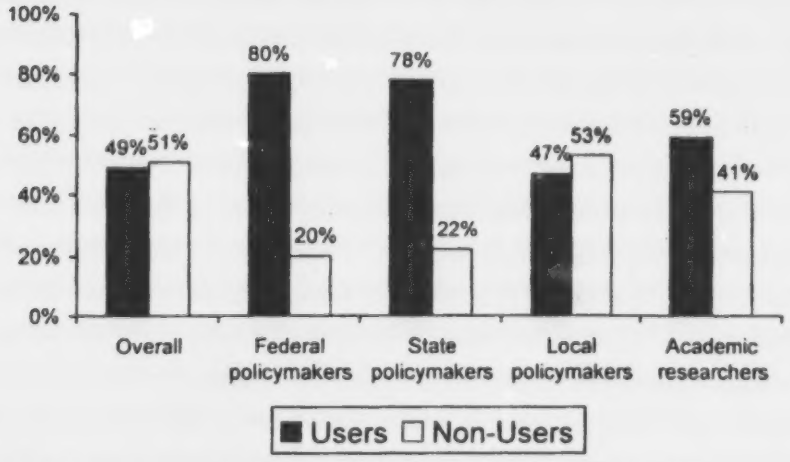
- Satisfied/no problems (reported by 22% of users)
- Send information on NCES products and services (18%)
- Increase awareness/marketing (18%)
- Improve timeliness (13%)
- Need other data/different stratification (9%)

VII. Questions for Non-Users

NCES non-users are individuals who have never used NCES products or services but who, based on their needs for education data, are potential customers. They formed 51 percent of all customers in the 1997 survey, distributed as follows: federal policymakers (0.2%), state policymakers (1%), local policymakers (95%; 84% affiliated with elementary/secondary school districts and 11% affiliated with postsecondary institutions), and academic researchers (4%).

Figure 28 compares the percentages of NCES users and non-users in the 1997 customer survey. While only 20 percent of federal policymakers and 22 percent of state policymakers were non-users, the percentages of non-users were considerably higher for local policymakers (53%) and academic researchers (41%).

Figure 28.—Usage vs. non-usage of NCES products and services, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

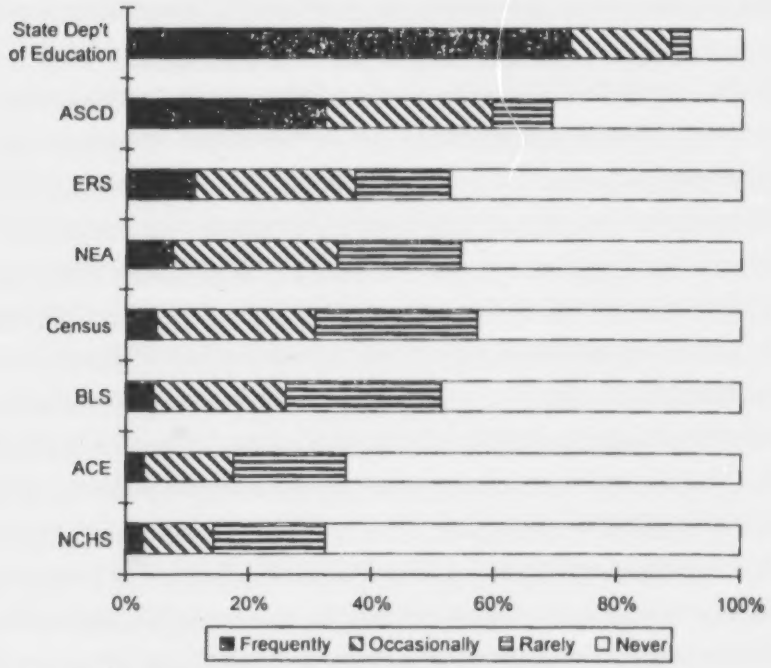
"How often have you obtained education data from an organization other than NCES in the last 3 years?"

Non-users of NCES products and services were asked whether or not they had used education data from any other organization in the last 3 years, and if so, how often. About 96 percent of this group reported using data from another organization, either frequently, occasionally, or rarely. Their usage of the various organizations is shown below:

- State Departments of Education (92%)
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) (69%)
- U.S. Bureau of the Census (Census) (56%)
- National Education Association (NEA) (54%)
- Educational Research Service (ERS) (52%)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (51%)
- American Council of Education (ACE) (35%)
- National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) (32%)
- Other organizations (54%)

While the rank order of the eight organizations was similar to that for NCES users, NEA ranked fourth among non-NCES users but sixth among NCES users. Usage of all organizations except State Departments of Education was substantially less among NCES non-users. Reports of *frequent* use were much fewer than overall use for NCES non-users, as was observed for NCES users. Only State Departments of Education were used frequently by a majority of NCES non-users (72%). (See figure 29.)

Figure 29.—Frequency with which non-users of NCES data obtain education data from other specific organizations



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

There were both similarities and differences among the four groups of NCES non-users. (See table 15.)

Table 15.—Usage of education data from organizations other than NCES, by NCES non-user group (percent)

	Total	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
Census	56	48	46	56	59
BLS	51	35	39	51	43
NCHS	32	16	17	32	31
ERS	52	0	20	53	38
NEA	54	40	45	54	51
ASCD	69	0	20	71	48
ACE	35	40	29	35	47
State Dept. of Education	92	58	91	93	72
Other organizations	54	32	52	54	49

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

State Departments of Education were the source of education data reported most often by each of the groups, although usage ranged from 58 percent of federal policymakers to 91 percent of state policymakers and 93 percent of local policymakers (96% of the elementary/secondary school district subgroup vs. 68% of the postsecondary institution subgroup). These findings are similar to those for NCES users.

The rank order differed by non-user group for the other seven organizations specified in the question. Census ranked second in overall usage among federal policymakers (48%) and academic researchers (59%), and third among state (46%) and local (56%) policymakers.

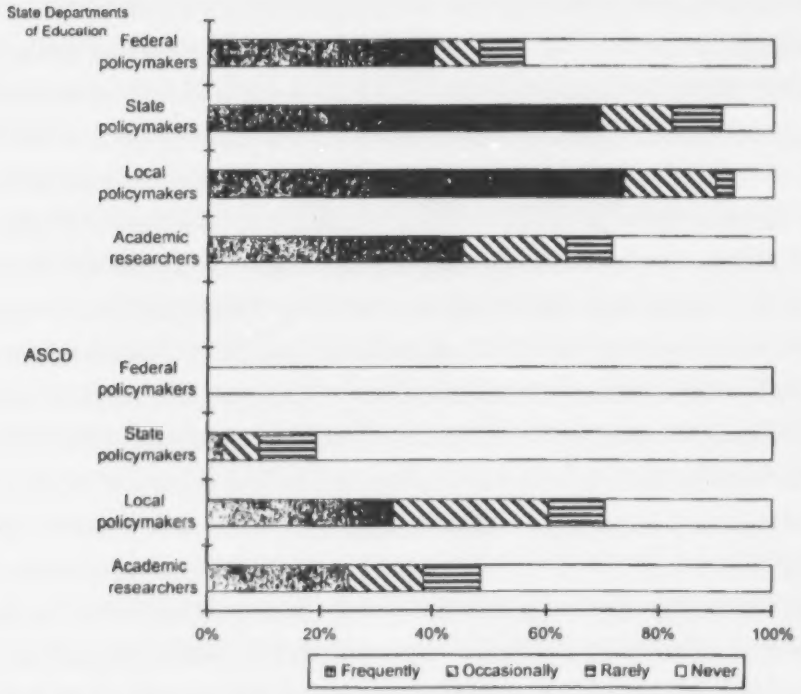
ASCD ranked second among local policymakers (71%), but this was only true for the elementary/secondary school district subgroup (77%). ACE was the second most used source of data for the postsecondary institution subgroup (47%), reflecting the different interests of this group.

NEA ranked third or fourth in total usage for every group, with percentages ranging from 40 percent of federal policymakers to 54 percent of local policymakers.

NCHS was the least used source of data for every group but federal policymakers.

The percentages of each group reporting *frequent* use of data from these organizations were substantially smaller than the percentages for total use. For State Departments of Education, reports of frequent use ranged from 40 percent of federal policymakers to 74 percent of local policymakers (80% of the elementary/secondary school district subgroup vs. 26% of the postsecondary institution subgroup). ASCD was the only other source of education data used frequently by at least one-fourth of NCES non-users: 25 percent of academic researchers and 33 percent of local policymakers (37% of the elementary/secondary school district subgroup vs. 2% of the postsecondary institution subgroup). (See figure 30.)

Figure 30.—Frequency with which non-users of NCES data obtain education data from State Departments of Education and ASCD, by customer group



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Some 54 percent of NCES non-users wrote in additional sources of education data, providing a list of over 200 organizations. There was substantial variation by non-user group. (The number of federal policymakers reporting additional organizations was too few to consider.)

- The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and Phi Delta Kappa were mentioned most frequently by NCES non-users (11% and 4%, respectively), as they were by NCES users.

- State policymakers most often cited the Education Commission of the States and the National Conference of State Legislators (22% and 21%, respectively).

- Local policymakers most frequently cited AASA (used by 11%, the same as the overall results); however, the school district subgroup (13%) accounted for most of these reports. The postsecondary institution subgroup most often cited the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (6%).

- Academic researchers most frequently cited the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (5%), the American Sociological Association (4%), and the American Association of College Teachers and Educators (4%).

"What are your needs for education data?"

Ninety-one percent of NCES non-users described their needs for education data while 9 percent indicated that they had no needs. Responses of those reporting needs fall into the following categories:

- Curriculum and planning/standards (24%)
- Institution/school governance (22%)
- Specific education issues (17%)
- Other (16%)
- Local/state/regional information and comparisons (12%)
- Use other sources (9%)

Appendix D details the types of comments grouped into these six broad categories.

The top response differed by non-user group. The most cited need of NCES non-users affiliated with the federal government was for specific education issues (22%). State policymakers indicated they use education data for local, state, or regional information (26%). Local policymakers stressed curriculum and planning (25%) and institution/school governance (21%). Thirty-seven percent of academic researchers need education data for institution/school governance.

VIII. Conclusions

High ratings are cause for satisfaction and concern.

As in 1996, NCES is very pleased that customers rate its publications and reports, data files, and services as highly as they did in this second survey.

The data generally indicate that the more experienced the user, the higher the level of satisfaction, and that satisfaction often varies significantly across customer groups. This suggests that care is required in basing performance standards on overall results of this survey, because subsequent broad-based surveys may show lower satisfaction overall depending on the types of customers being included in the survey.

Even with high ratings, users sent a strong message about timeliness.

As was true in 1996, a comparatively low percentage of users were very satisfied or satisfied with the timeliness of NCES publications and reports (72%) and data files (51%). These comparatively low satisfaction levels are especially significant for an aspect that most users ranked as *second most important overall* in priority for both NCES publications and reports and NCES data files.

The survey results make clear, however, that improvements in timeliness would not be desired by users at the expense of accuracy, the *top* ranked aspect in terms of importance, and an area in which NCES achieved high marks.

NCES managers will assess customer feedback and take appropriate action.

Although NCES products and services had high marks overall, the results from the 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey are being shared with program managers. These managers can use the data to determine what can be done to improve service to customers and timeliness of products and services.

NCES will take further action to advise customers—current and potential—of its products and services.

As became evident during the customer focus groups, NCES customers are not aware of the broad range of products and services available to them. For example, of the customers who had *not* used NCES *publications and reports* in the past 3 years (56%), more than half (59%) said the reason was that they were not aware of the products. Of the 93 percent of customers who had *not* used NCES *data files* in the past 3 years, 62 percent said the reason was that they were not aware of them. In addition, less than half of the customers were aware of any of the seven NCES services identified by the survey—and only 34 percent of the customers overall said they knew how to contact NCES.

These policymaker and researcher customer groups—who are especially important to the NCES mission because of their potential effect on the "condition and progress of education"—were not broadly aware of NCES products and services. For example, local policymakers are a key customer group, yet only *43 percent* of those surveyed had used NCES publications and reports in the past 3 years and a mere *6 percent* had used NCES data files in the same time period. Furthermore, these customers tended to rely on more passive means (such as received in mail); this is especially notable in that only 32 percent of local policymakers said they knew how to contact NCES. Data file usage was also low (14%) among academic researchers—a group that would be expected to have much higher usage. *Clearly, the implication for NCES is that outreach is especially important.*

NCES did well in comparison to the "best of the rest."

An important part of this survey was to compare NCES products and services against other organizations—referred to as benchmark organizations—from which NCES users also get information. The survey listed eight organizations and included an open-ended "other" category, to which NCES users filled in well over 300 organizations. Of these, users were asked to select a source of education data other than NCES with which they were "most favorably impressed." Then they were asked to compare the selected best of the rest with NCES.

Federal and state policymakers and academic researchers were more likely to consider NCES the same as or better than the benchmark organization, and did so across all areas. The same was not true of local researchers, who chose the benchmark organization as better in all categories except quality of product and frequency of data collection.

However, there may be a correlation between the usefulness and level of the data (national, state, local) and the chosen "better" organization, especially in rating such areas as coverage of topics in education and responsiveness to the customer's needs. This apparent correlation is supported in two ways. First, local policymakers were much less likely to use NCES products and services than were state policymakers. Second, the needs for education data indicated by non-users of NCES products and services differed by group. For example, the most frequently cited need of non-users affiliated with the federal government was for specific education issues—a need NCES meets well. In contrast, the top two needs reported by local policymakers were curriculum/planning and institution/school governance—needs NCES meets less well than benchmark organizations that focus on curriculum or state and local data.

Further analysis of this type of benchmark data may be warranted.

NCES needs to consider follow-on surveys and focus groups.

In some areas, additional focused surveys may be required. Especially regarding data files, where the responding population was relatively small, the results may not be fully representative.

Also, as indicated above, NCES may want to conduct further focus groups with their key customers to understand more about their highest rated and most frequently used benchmark organizations, such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the State Departments of Education. To develop information that will allow a plan of action for improvement, NCES needs more information than that its performance is better than, the same as, or worse than a given organization. There

should be a similarity or correlation between the information provided by NCES and the benchmark organization so that a meaningful comparison can be made—and it is often important to know *why* one organization is chosen over another.

NCES will strive to maintain, and improve if possible, high customer satisfaction.

Customers have responded to NCES positively, predominantly expressing satisfaction with NCES publications, reports, data files, and services. With those expressions of satisfaction, however, have come some warnings about areas that NCES needs to improve. It is now up to NCES to respond positively to the customers —to take those actions that will improve the quality, timeliness, and usability of its products and services on behalf of its customers.

APPENDIX A

1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey

ID#_____

1997 NCES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

TELEPHONE CALL INTRODUCTION

CALL CONTACT. IF NOT AVAILABLE, OBTAIN A TIME TO CALL BACK.
IF AVAILABLE, CONTINUE.

My name is (YOUR NAME) and I'm calling from Westat on behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics—NCES—U.S. Department of Education. Did you receive a letter and the 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey?

☐**NO ⟶ FAX/RESEND SURVEY AND MAKE APPOINTMENT.**
☐**YES ⟶ ASK: DID YOU COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SURVEY?**
IF YES, THANK RESPONDENT AND DOUBLE-CHECK RECORDS. IF RECORDS INDICATE SURVEY HAS NOT BEEN RECEIVED, NOTE THAT RESPONDENT CLAIMS IT HAS BEEN SENT.
IF NO, ASK: IS THIS A CONVENIENT TIME TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY?
IF NO, MAKE APPOINTMENT.
IF YES, ASK RESPONDENT IF HE HAS THE SURVEY IN FRONT OF HIM AND THEN CONTINUE WITH CONDUCTING THE SURVEY.

SECTION A—Questions about NCES Publications and Reports

I would like to ask you some questions about NCES publications and reports.

A1. Have you used publications or reports from NCES in the past 3 years? A few examples are Condition of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, and the NAEP, National Assessment of Educational Progress Report Card for the Nation and the States. (IF RESPONDENT WANTS ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES, READ FROM A2 LIST BELOW)

Yes .....1 **(SKIP TO A2)**
No .....2 **(CONTINUE)**

A1a. I am going to provide you a list of reasons why you may not have used NCES publications or reports. For each reason, tell me if it applies to you. (CIRCLE YES OR NO FOR EACH ONE)

	Yes	No
Your work does not require use of NCES publications or reports	1	2
NCES publications or reports are not relevant to you	1	2
NCES publications or reports are outdated	1	2
You are not aware of NCES publications or reports	1	2
Any other reason? (please specify)	1	2

_____

_____

(GO TO SECTION B)

A2. I am going to read a list of NCES publications or reports. For each one you have used, tell me how satisfied you were with it. If you have not used the publication or report in the past 3 years, please tell me.

READ EACH PUBLICATION/ REPORT, THEN ASK ⟶	Were you... Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	NOT USED IN PAST 3 YEARS
a. Condition of Education	1	2	3	4	5	8
b. Digest of Education Statistics	1	2	3	4	5	8
c. Projections of Education Statistics	1	2	3	4	5	8
d. EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT REPORTS: Some examples are: NAEP 1994 Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States; Literacy of Older Adults in America; and Reading Literacy in the United States	1	2	3	4	5	8

READ EACH PUBLICATION/ REPORT, THEN ASK →	Were you... Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	NOT USED IN PAST 3 YEARS
e. NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDIES REPORTS: An example is: Descriptive Summary of 1989-90 Beginning Postsecondary Students: 5 Years Later	1	2	3	4	5	8
f. LIBRARY DATA REPORTS: Some examples are: Federal Libraries in the U.S., 1994; and School Library/Media Centers in the U.S., 1990-91	1	2	3	4	5	8
g. ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION REPORTS: Some examples are: Characteristics of the 100 Largest School Districts; and Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1993-94	1	2	3	4	5	8
h. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REPORTS: Some examples are: Degrees and Other Awards Conferred by Institutions, 1993-94; and Integrating Research on Faculty: Seeking New Ways to Communicate About the Academic Life of Faculty	1	2	3	4	5	8
i. OTHER PUBLICATIONS: Some examples are: Vocational Education in the United States: The Early 1990s; Advanced Telecommunications in U.S. Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, Fall 1996; and Education in States and Nations: 1991	1	2	3	4	5	8

(SECTION A—continued)

A3. We are interested in finding out the usefulness of different publication formats. I am going to read a list of different publication formats used by NCES. For each one you have used, tell me how useful it is to you. If you have never used the publication or report format, please tell me.

READ EACH PUBLICATION FORMAT, THEN ASK ⟶	Were they... Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	NEVER USED
a. Issue Briefs, which are about two pages with a policy focus	1	2	3	8
b. Topical or Analytic Reports, which are text with a few tables	1	2	3	8
c. Tabular Reports, which are mostly tables with some text, such as the Digest of Education Statistics	1	2	3	8
d. Technical or Methodological Reports	1	2	3	8
e. Directories such as directories of school districts or postsecondary institutions	1	2	3	8

A4. We are interested in finding out how satisfied you are with the following aspects of the NCES publications and reports that you have used in electronic or printed format. Please tell me how satisfied you are with each aspect.

READ EACH PUBLICATION ASPECT, THEN ASK ⟶	Were you... Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
a. Comprehensiveness	1	2	3	4	5
b. Clarity of writing	1	2	3	4	5
c. Timeliness of information	1	2	3	4	5
d. Accuracy	1	2	3	4	5
e. Usefulness to your work	1	2	3	4	5
f. Overall quality of reports	1	2	3	4	5

A5. Now consider your needs and uses of publications and reports. I will read four aspects of publications and reports to you. Although all of the aspects may be desirable, tell me which one you consider most important, second most important and third most important. (READ ALL ASPECTS FIRST AND MARK 1, 2, AND 3)

Comprehensiveness ..... _____
Clarity of writing ..... _____
Timeliness of information ..... _____
Accuracy ..... _____

SECTION B—Questions about NCES Data Files

Now I would like to ask you some questions about NCES electronic data files you may have used.

B1. Have you used any NCES electronic data files in the past 3 years? A few examples are the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and Common Core of Data (CCD). (IF RESPONDENT WANTS ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES, READ FROM B2 LIST BELOW)

Yes .....1 **(SKIP TO B2)**
No .....2 **(CONTINUE)**

B1a. I am going to provide you a list of reasons why you may not have used NCES data files. For each one, please tell me if it applies to you. (CIRCLE YES OR NO FOR EACH ONE)

	Yes	No
Someone else on staff is responsible for data files	1	2
You prefer written format	1	2
Electronic data files are hard or clumsy to use	1	2
You don't need NCES data files to get information you want	1	2
Electronic data files are not relevant to you	1	2
Electronic data files are outdated	1	2
You are not aware of NCES electronic data files	1	2
Any other reason? (please specify)	1	2

_____

_____

(GO TO SECTION C)

B2. I'm going to read a list of NCES electronic data files. For each one you have used, tell me how satisfied you were with it. If you have not used the data file in the past 3 years, please tell me.

READ EACH ELECTRONIC FILE NAME, THEN ASK ——>	Were you...					
	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	NOT USED IN PAST 3 YEARS
a. Common Core of Data (CCD)	1	2	3	4	5	8
b. Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)	1	2	3	4	5	8
c. National Household Education Survey (NHES)	1	2	3	4	5	8
d. School District Data Book (SDDB)	1	2	3	4	5	8
e. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)	1	2	3	4	5	8
f. National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF)	1	2	3	4	5	8
g. Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (BPS)	1	2	3	4	5	8
h. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)	1	2	3	4	5	8

(SECTION B—continued)

READ EACH ELECTRONIC FILE NAME, THEN ASK ——→	Were you... Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	NOT USED IN PAST 3 YEARS
i. Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B)	1	2	3	4	5	8
j. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	1	2	3	4	5	8
k. National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS)	1	2	3	4	5	8
l. National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88)	1	2	3	4	5	8
m. High School and Beyond (HS&B)	1	2	3	4	5	8
n. National Longitudinal Study of 1972 (NLS-72)	1	2	3	4	5	8
o. Academic Library Survey (ALS)	1	2	3	4	5	8
p Public Library Survey (PLS)	1	2	3	4	5	8
q. School Library/Media Center Survey	1	2	3	4	5	8
r. Vocational Education Electronic Table Library	1	2	3	4	5	8
s. Education Statistics on Disk	1	2	3	4	5	8
t. International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement IEA Reading Literacy Survey	1	2	3	4	5	8

B3. Overall, how satisfied were you with the following aspects of the NCES electronic data files that you have used?

READ EACH ASPECT, THEN ASK ——→	Were you... Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
a. Comprehensiveness of data in the file	1	2	3	4	5
b. Ease of use	1	2	3	4	5
c. User interface, for example, the Electronic Code Book (ECB) and Data Analysis System (DAS)	1	2	3	4	5
d. File documentation	1	2	3	4	5
e. Accuracy of data in the file	1	2	3	4	5
f. Timeliness of file release	1	2	3	4	5

B4. Now consider your needs and uses for electronic data files. I will read six aspects of data files to you. Although all of the aspects may be desirable, tell me which one you consider most important, second most important, and third most important. (READ ALL ASPECTS FIRST AND MARK 1, 2, AND 3)

Comprehensiveness of data in the file..... _____
Ease of use..... _____
User interface, for example, the Electronic Code Book (ECB) and the Data Analysis System (DAS)..... _____
File documentation..... _____
Accuracy of data in the file..... _____
Timeliness of file release..... _____

SECTION C—Questions about NCES Services

Now I would like to ask you some questions about services provided by NCES, such as conferences, training, internet, and obtaining information by telephone or mail.

C1. If you have a question, do you know how to contact NCES?

Yes..... 1
No..... 2

C2. I am going to read a list of NCES services. For each one, please tell me whether you have used it, have not used it, or are not aware of it. (READ EACH SERVICE AND CIRCLE YES, NO, OR NOT AWARE. IF YES, ASK SATISFACTION LEVEL. IF NO, ASK AGAIN: Are you aware of this service?)

a1. Have you attended NCES training seminars or workshops in the past 3 years?			**a2. Were you..**				
YES (GO TO a2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO b1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO b1)				

b1. Have you attended NCES conferences in the past 3 years?			**b2. Were you..**				
YES (GO TO b2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO c1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO c1)				

c1. Have you used the National Education Data Resource Center (NEDRC) in the past 3 years?			**c2. Were you..**				
YES (GO TO c2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO d1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO d1)				

d1. Have you participated in the NCES fellows program in the past 3 years?			d2. Were you..				
YES (GO TO d2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO e1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO e1)				

e1. Have you visited the NCES site on the Internet?			e2. Were you..				
YES (GO TO e2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO f1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO f1)				

f1. Have you used Faxback?			f2. Were you..				
YES (GO TO f2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO g1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO g1)				

g1. Have you used the NCES 1-800 toll free number for education statistics in the past 3 years?			g2. Were you..				
YES (GO TO g2)	NO (CONFIRM) → (SKIP TO h1)	NOT AWARE	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5
			(GO TO h1)				

h1. Have you ordered NCES publications in the past 3 years?		h2. How satisfied were you with ordering publications?				
YES (GO TO h2)	NO (SKIP TO i1)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	1	2	3	4	5
		(GO TO i1)				

i1. Have you ordered NCES electronic data files in the past 3 years?		i2. How satisfied were you with ordering electronic data files?				
YES (GO TO i2)	NO (SKIP TO j1)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	1	2	3	4	5
		(GO TO j1)				

j1. Have you mailed a request for NCES information in the past 3 years?		j2. How satisfied were you with the handling of your mail request?				
YES (GO TO j2)	NO (SKIP TO C3)	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied
1	2	1	2	3	4	5
		(GO TO C3)				

PLEASE CHECK ONE

☐ ⟶ **IF "NO" OR "NOT AWARE" TO ALL SERVICES, a-j ABOVE, SKIP TO SECTION D**

☐ ⟶ **OTHERWISE, CONTINUE WITH C3**

C3. Taking into account all the experiences you have had with NCES services, how satisfied were you with the...

READ EACH ASPECT, THEN ASK ⟶	Were you...					
	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Does Not Apply
a. Extent to which the information met your needs	1	2	3	4	5	9
b. Speed with which you received the information	1	2	3	4	5	9
c. Ease of obtaining the information	1	2	3	4	5	9
d. Staff expertise	1	2	3	4	5	9
e. Time needed to reach knowledgeable staff	1	2	3	4	5	9
f. Courtesy of staff	1	2	3	4	5	9
g. Handling of complaints	1	2	3	4	5	9

SECTION D—Questions About You, Our Customer

D1. How frequently have you used NCES products or services? Would you say…(READ CATEGORIES)

Once a week or more	1	
Once a month or more	2	
Several times a year	3	
One time in the last 12 months	4	
Once in the last 3 years	5	
More than 3 years ago	6	
Never	7	**(SKIP TO SECTION F)**

D2. How often do you use NCES data for the following purposes?

READ EACH PURPOSE, THEN ASK ——>	Would you say…			
	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
a. Planning	1	2	3	4
b. Policy or legislation	1	2	3	4
c. Administrative decisions	1	2	3	4
d. Teaching or class material	1	2	3	4
e. Research or analysis	1	2	3	4
f. General information	1	2	3	4
g. Writing news articles, preparing TV or radio material	1	2	3	4
h. Updating databases	1	2	3	4
i. Reformulating data for use by others	1	2	3	4
j. Marketing, sales or promotion	1	2	3	4
k. Giving speeches	1	2	3	4

D3. How did you find out about NCES publications and data products? Did you find out from … (READ EACH CATEGORY AND ASK: YES OR NO)

	Yes	No
a. Conferences	1	2
b. Journal articles	1	2
c. Colleagues	1	2
d. NCES publications	1	2
e. Professional associations	1	2
f. Received in the mail	1	2
g. Ongoing contact with NCES staff	1	2
h. Internet	1	2
i. Product announcements	1	2

SECTION E—Benchmarking

E1. The following is a list of organizations. Please tell me how often you have obtained education data from each organization in the past 3 years.

READ EACH ORGANIZATION, THEN ASK ——>	Would you say...			
	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
a. U.S. Bureau of Census (Census)	1	2	3	4
b. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)	1	2	3	4
c. National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)	1	2	3	4
d. Educational Research Service (ERS)	1	2	3	4
e. National Education Association (NEA)	1	2	3	4
f. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)	1	2	3	4
g. American Council of Education (ACE)	1	2	3	4
h. State Department of Education	1	2	3	4
i. Other government agencies or professional associations (please specify whole name)	1	2	3	4

_____

(IF NEVER FOR ALL ORGANIZATIONS, SKIP TO E4)

E2. Of the organizations that you just indicated using, with which ONE organization were you MOST favorably impressed? Would you say…[READ LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS USED IN E1 ABOVE]

_____

(name of organization)

E3. Please compare and state whether [READ E2 RESPONSE] is worse, the same, or better than NCES on the following dimensions.

	Was [E2 response...]				
	Worse	Same	Better	Don't Know	Not Comparable
a. Coverage of topics in education that are relevant to your needs	1	2	3	7	9
b. Frequency of data collection	1	2	3	7	9
c. Timeliness of data release	1	2	3	7	9
d. Responsiveness to your needs	1	2	3	7	9
e. Knowledge of staff	1	2	3	7	9
f. Effort to meet your needs	1	2	3	7	9
g. Quality of product	1	2	3	7	9

E4. We've now finished with the questions with pre-defined responses. We are interested in how NCES may better meet your needs. Please tell me about any problems you have or ways NCES might improve its products or services.

_____

_____

This concludes the survey.

Thank you very much for completing the survey today. We appreciate your input.

SECTION F—Non-Users

F1. I am going to read a list of organizations. Please tell me how often you have obtained education data from each organization in the past 3 years.

READ EACH ORGANIZATION, THEN ASK ——>	Would you say... Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
a. U.S. Bureau of Census (Census)	1	2	3	4
b. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)	1	2	3	4
c. National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)	1	2	3	4
d. Educational Research Service (ERS)	1	2	3	4
e. National Education Association (NEA)	1	2	3	4
f. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)	1	2	3	4
g. American Council of Education (ACE)	1	2	3	4
h. State Department of Education	1	2	3	4
i. Other government agencies or professional associations (please specify whole name)	1	2	3	4

_____

F2. What are your needs for education data?

_____

_____

_____

F3. Would you be interested in learning more about NCES products and services?

Yes 1	**(CONTINUE)**
No 2	**(END INTERVIEW)**

F3a. We will mail you a brochure about NCES products and services. I'd like to first verify your name, address, and telephone number:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

PHONE # : _____

This concludes the survey.

Thank you very much for completing the survey today. We appreciate your input.

If you have any questions or problems concerning this study, please contact Brad Chaney by e-mail at Chaneyb1@Westat.com, or call Westat's Survey Information Line at 1-800-937-8288.

APPENDIX B

Methodology

Appendix B: Methodology

This appendix describes the methodology for the 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey, including questionnaire design and pretest, frame development and sampling design, survey operations and calculation of response rates (unit and item), weighting procedures, standard error calculations, and formulas for testing statistical significance.

Questionnaire Design

The 1996 Customer Satisfaction Survey instrument was used as the basis for the redesign of the 1997 instrument, but there are several differences between the two.

First, two new sections were added to the 1997 instrument: Benchmarking (Section E) and Non-users (Section F). NCES non-users are individuals who have never used NCES products or services but who, based on their needs for education data, are potential customers.

The Benchmarking section of the questionnaire, while essentially new, grew out of some questions in the 1996 instrument. The new questions were designed to capture more useful information about other sources of education data used by NCES customers. The purpose of these questions is to develop measures of comparison between NCES and other organizations that can serve as benchmarks for future evaluations. Questions in the Benchmarking section asked users to identify other organizations/associations they may have used, to identify the organization with which they were most impressed, and to compare this organization/association to NCES on seven dimensions. The section concludes by asking respondents to write about any problems or ways NCES might improve its products or services.

The Non-users section of the 1997 survey asks non-users of NCES data to identify other organizations/associations they may have used for education data. Non-users are then asked, in an open-ended question, to identify any needs they may have for education data.

Second, the 1997 survey includes a set of questions asking customers their reasons for not using NCES publications/ reports (Question A1a) and electronic data files (Question B1a). Other differences include slight changes in the order of the sections, question wording, and response categories.

The 1997 survey instrument was designed to be conducted by telephone. Several rounds of pretests were conducted by telephone before the final version was completed. Due to respondent comments, it was decided to mail the telephone instrument to sampled individuals ahead of time with instructions that gave them the option of mailing it back.

Frame Development

The target population for the 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey included 20,033 federal, state, and local policymakers and academic researchers. (See table 16.) The population included current customers and potential customers.

The first step in developing a sampling frame was to create lists of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of federal and state policymakers.

Next, the Common Core of Data (CCD) and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) databases were used to develop lists of local policymakers. The 1993 CCD includes addresses and telephone numbers of elementary/secondary school districts. The 1994 IPEDS includes addresses and telephone numbers of postsecondary institutions.

IPEDS was also used to develop one portion of the list of academic researchers, a list of Deans of Schools of Education. The American Sociological Association was the source for another portion of the list of academic researchers, the Chairs of Departments of Sociology. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers for the final group of academic researchers, directors of OERI National Research and Development Centers and of Regional Education Laboratories, were obtained from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

Final contact persons for the local policymaker and academic researcher strata were identified through phone calls made to more than 2,500 institutions and school districts. The names and titles/positions of these individuals were added to the records in the frame database.

The final product was a frame database with the following principal fields: names, titles, addresses, telephone numbers, and stratum and substratum identifiers.

Table 16.—Subcategories of customers in 1997 frame

Population	Substratum size	Stratum size
FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS		**129**
Department of Education Senior Officers and Senior Staff (Assistant Secretaries)	29	
National Science Foundation (NSF)	2	
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)	9	
Congressional Research Service (CRS)	4	
General Accounting Office-Education Staff (GAO)	30	
Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Children and Families, Employment and Training	16	
House Committee on Education on Early Childhood and Families; Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, Training, and Life-long Learning	39	
STATE POLICYMAKERS		**361**
House/Senate: National Conference of State Legislators (elementary/secondary ed.)	141	
State Department of Education		
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (elementary/secondary ed.)	50	
State Higher Education Executive Finance Officers (SHEEFO)	56	
State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)	56	
Library: Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)	58	
LOCAL POLICYMAKERS		**18,464**
Elementary/Secondary Education: School district superintendents (Source: 1993 CCD[1])		*16,365*
Large central city	306	
Large city	354	
Mid-size central city	945	
Rural	6,815	
Small town	4,394	
Urban fringe of large city	1,478	
Urban fringe of mid-size	1,055	
Blank	1,018	
Higher Education: "Director of Institutional Research" (Source: 1994 IPEDS[2])		*2,099*
Research Universities & Doctoral Universities		
Public	151	
Private	85	
Master's Universities & Colleges		
Public	275	
Private	254	
Baccalaureate Colleges		
Public	86	
Private	551	
Specialized Institutions	697	
ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS		**1,079**
Directors of OERI National Research and Development Centers/Regional Education Laboratories	20	
Deans of Schools of Education (Source: NCES)	842	
Chairs of Departments of Sociology (Source: American Sociological Association)	217	
Total		**20,033**

[1] Common Core of Data

[2] Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Sampling Design

Whenever sampling was undertaken for surveying individuals in any stratum or substratum, simple random sampling was used.

All federal and state policymakers were sampled (n=129 and n=361, respectively), and samples were drawn from the local policymaker and academic researcher groups. For local policymakers, the two substrata—the elementary/secondary education group and the higher education group—were treated separately. The elementary/secondary education substratum was further stratified based on eight urbanicity levels (see table 17).

Table 17.—Elementary/secondary local policymaker subgroups

Urbanicity (agency locale code)	Substratum size	Percent sample	Sample size
Large central city	306	38%	115
Large city	354	32%	115
Mid-size central city	945	12%	115
Rural	6,815	3%	200
Small town	4,394	5%	200
Urban fringe of large city	1,478	8%	115
Urban fringe of mid-size	1,055	11%	115
Blank	1,018	11%	115
Total	**16,365**		**1,090**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The higher education substratum was further stratified based on the Carnegie Foundation Classification Codes. See table 18 for details on substratum size, percent sample, and sample size.

Table 18.—Higher education local policymaker subgroups

Carnegie Foundation Classification Codes	Substratum size	Percent sample	Sample size
Research Universities and Doctoral Universities (N=236)			
Public	151	70%	105
Private	85	71%	60
Master's Universities and Colleges (N=529)			
Public	275	42%	115
Private	254	45%	115
Baccalaureate Colleges (N=637)			
Public	86	70%	60
Private (includes 7 for-profit institutions)	551	27%	150
Specialized institutions (N=697)	697	22%	150
Total	**2,099**		**755**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Among the academic researchers, all individuals in the OERI National Research and Development Centers and Regional Education Labs were sampled. A sample was taken of Deans of Schools of Education and Chairs of Sociology Departments, as shown in table 19.

Table 19.—Academic researcher subgroups

Group	Substratum size	Percent sample	Sample size
OERI National R&D Centers/ Regional Education Labs	20	100%	20
Deans of Schools of Education	842	61%	510
Chairs of Sociology Depts.	217	53%	115
Total	**1,079**		**645**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Survey Operations

The survey was conducted during the summer of 1997 by Westat, a survey research firm in Rockville, Maryland. The initial mailing was sent in late July. The instructions on the survey indicated that the questionnaire was a telephone survey script that respondents could complete and return (see appendix A). Starting two weeks later, all nonrespondents were called and data collected over the telephone.

In addition, NCES, in conjunction with Synectics and Westat, decided that "extra" attempts would be made to have respondents complete certain critical items. Callbacks would be performed if a respondent did not complete the following items: Questions A2 (satisfaction with specific publications), B2 (satisfaction with electronic data files), and C2 (satisfaction with NCES services). Non-users of NCES data who did not answer Questions F1 (use of education data from other organizations) **and** F2 (needs for education data) were also called back.

Unit Response Rates

During the data collection phase, 32 out-of-scope cases were identified, the majority being schools/districts that had closed. Subtracting the out-of-scope cases from the sample provided a total in-scope sample of 2,948. The final response rate was 84 percent—calculated as the number of completed interviews divided by the sampled respondents minus respondents considered to be out-of-scope. Among the 2,465 responding cases, 810 (33%) surveys were completed by mail, and 1,655 (67%) were completed in the telephone follow-up. See table 20.

Table 20.—Data collection mode of completed questionnaires, by stratum

	Percent completed by mail/fax (%)	Percent completed by phone (%)	Number of completed surveys
Federal policymakers	40.4%	59.6	89
State policymakers	38.5%	61.5	278
Local policymakers	31.6%	68.4	1,565
Academic researchers	32.3%	67.7	533
Total	**32.9%**	**67.1**	**2,465**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The highest response rate occurred among local policymakers (86%), while the lowest occurred among federal policymakers (71%). The primary causes of nonresponse were sampled members who indicated by phone that they were "too busy" to answer the survey or who agreed to respond to the survey by mail but did not. Among the 30 substrata in the sample shown in table 21, only 4 substrata showed a response rate below 75 percent: Department of Education (66%), OMB (67%), House policymakers (49%), and House/Senate state policymakers (58%).

Table 21.—Unweighted response rates for 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey

	Stratum/ substratum size	Sample size	Out-of-scope cases	In-scope cases	Unweighted number of responses	Unweighted response rate
FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS*	**129**	**129**	**3**	**126**	**89**	**70.6%**
Department of Education	29	29	0	29	19	65.5%
NSF	2	2	0	2	2	100.0%
OMB	9	9	3	6	4	66.7%
CRS	4	4	0	4	4	100.0%
GAO	30	30	0	30	29	96.7%
Senate	16	16	0	16	12	75.0%
House	39	39	0	39	19	48.7%
STATE POLICYMAKERS*	**361**	**361**	**10**	**351**	**278**	**79.2%**
House/Senate	141	141	1	140	81	57.9%
State Department of Education	162	162	8	154	144	93.5%
Library	58	58	1	57	53	93.0%
LOCAL POLICYMAKERS*	**18,464**	**1,845**	**16**	**1,829**	**1,565**	**85.6%**
Elementary/Secondary Education	***16,365***	***1,090***	***9***	***1,081***	***902***	***83.4%***
Large central city	306	115	2	113	88	77.9%
Large city	354	115	5	110	94	85.5%
Mid-size central city	945	115	2	113	100	88.5%
Rural	6,815	200	0	200	177	88.5%
Small town	4,394	200	0	200	167	83.5%
Urban fringe of large city	1,478	115	0	115	87	75.7%
Urban fringe of mid-size	1,055	115	0	115	97	84.3%
Blank	1,018	115	0	115	92	80.0%
Higher Education	***2,099***	***755***	***7***	***748***	***663***	***88.6%***
Res Univ & Doct Univ						
Public	151	105	3	102	98	96.1%
Private	85	60	1	59	53	89.8%
Master's Univ & Colleges						
Public	275	115	2	113	100	88.5%
Private	254	115	1	114	99	86.8%
Baccalaureate Colleges						
Public	86	60	0	60	55	91.7%
Private	551	150	0	150	139	92.7%
Specialized Institutions	697	150	0	150	119	79.3%
ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS*	**1,079**	**645**	**3**	**642**	**533**	**83.0%**
OERI/Regional Education Labs	20	20	0	20	15	75.0%
Deans of Schools of Education	842	510	1	509	422	82.9%
Chairs of Sociology Departments	217	115	2	113	96	85.0%
TOTAL	**20,033**	**2,980**	**32**	**2,948**	**2,465**	**83.6%**

* These categories represent the four strata in the sample.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Table 22 shows the weighted number of respondents and weighted response rates across each of the four main customer groups and the local policymaker substrata.

Table 22.—Weighted response rates for 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey

	Weighted number of respondents	Weighted response rate
Federal policymakers	89	70.6
State policymakers	278	79.2
Local policymakers	15,684	85.2
Elementary/secondary substratum	*13,868*	*84.9*
Higher education substratum	*1,816*	*87.1*
Academic researchers	893	83.2
Total	**16,944**	**84.9**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Item Response Rates

NCES Standard III-02-92 stipulates that item response rates (R_i) "are to be calculated as the ratio of the number of respondents for which an in-scope response was obtained to the number of completed interviews for which the question (or questions if a composite variable) was intended to be asked."[1]

For calculating item response rates, questions composed of several subitems were sometimes considered together. Table 23 shows item response rates for all questions in the survey. Questions in **bold** are critical items, and questions in *italics* are open-ended items. The median item response rate was 98 percent. Among close-ended items, no items had response rates of less than 93 percent. Surprisingly, even the open-ended items showed high response rates with a median item response rate of 97 percent.

[1] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *NCES Statistical Standards*, NCES 92-021, by Emmett Flemming, Jr. (Washington, DC: 1992), 30.

Table 23.—Item response rates for 1997 NCES Customer Satisfaction Survey

Survey question number/question wording (abbreviated)		Number of items	Item response rate (%)
A1	Used publications or reports from NCES?	1	100.0
A1a	List of reasons why not used NCES pubs/reports	4	96.8
A1other	*Any other reason not used NCES publications*	*1*	*96.8*
A2	**Satisfaction with publications or reports**	**9**	**100.0**
A3	Usefulness of publication formats	5	99.4
A4	Satisfaction with aspects of NCES pubs/reports	6	99.2
A5	Importance of aspects of publications and reports	5	97.3
B1	Used electronic data files?	1	100.0
B1a	List of reasons why not used electronic data files	7	97.8
B1other	*Any other reason not used electronic data files*	*1*	*97.3*
B2	**Satisfaction with electronic data files**	**20**	**100.0**
B3	Satisfaction with aspects of electronic data files	6	97.4
B4	Importance of aspects of electronic data files	6	95.9
C1	Know how to contact NCES?	1	98.5
C2a1 through C2j1	Used, have not used, or not aware of NCES services[1]	10	100.0
C2a2 through C2j2	**Satisfaction with NCES services**	**10**	**99.9**
C3	Satisfaction with experience with NCES services	7	93.2
D1	Frequency of use of NCES products or services	1	99.3
D2	Frequency of use of NCES for various purposes	11	98.1
D3	How informed about NCES publications and data products	9	97.8
E1	Frequency of obtaining education data from organizations	9	98.6
E2	Organization most impressed with	1	98.6
E3	Comparison of organization to NCES	7	94.5
E4	*Problems or ways NCES might improve its products or services*	*1*	*71.1*
F1	**Frequency of obtaining education data from organizations**	**9**	**99.0**
F2	***Needs for education data***	***1***	***87.4***

[1] Items C2h1, C2i1, and C2j1 exclude "not aware of" response category.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Weighting Procedures

Weights were developed as N_h/n_h, where,

N_h = stratum/substratum size (column 1 in table 21)
n_h = unweighted number of respondents in stratum (column 5 in table 21)

The weighted estimates are added over the strata or substrata and divided by the total population size to obtain an estimate of an average or a percentage.

Standard Error Calculations

The standard error (s.e.) of any estimated percentage (p_h) from the h[th] stratum, when the sampling fraction $\frac{n_h}{N_h}$ is small, is approximately equal to $\sqrt{\frac{p_h(100-p_h)}{n_h-1}}$, where n_h is the number of respondents, and N_h is the corresponding stratum size. If the sampling fraction $(\frac{n_h}{N_h})$ is not small, the above formulas must be modified by a quantity known as the finite population correction factor and the standard error of p_h is equal to:

$$\sqrt{\frac{(N_h-n_h)}{N_h}\frac{p_h(100-p_h)}{n_h-1}}$$

For a percentage calculated at a population (or subpopulation) level, consisting of k strata, the following formula gives the standard error at the population (subpopulation) level.

s.e. (population or subpopulation) =

$$\sqrt{\frac{N_1^2(s.e._1)^2 + N_2^2(s.e._2)^2 + \ldots + N_k^2(s.e._k)^2}{(N_1 + N_2 + \ldots + N_k)^2}}$$

where N's are strata sizes and
s.e's are strata standard errors.

Confidence Intervals

Intervals can be constructed for different confidence levels once the standard error (s.e.) is estimated. For example, a 95 percent confidence interval for the unknown population percentage is given by $p - 1.96$(s.e.), $p + 1.96$(s.e.), where 1.96 is the normal deviate corresponding to 95 percent probability.

Tables of standard errors for selected percentages in the report are provided in table 24.

Table 24.—Standard error tables for selected estimates (percents) included in this report

Survey item	Question wording	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
	Percentage who found out about publications/data through				
D3f	The mail (table 1, page 12)	5.45	2.33	2.04	2.73
D3d	NCES publications (table 1, page 12)	5.61	2.36	2.49	2.78
D3b	Journal articles (table 1, page 12)	4.70	3.84	2.81	2.64
D3c	Colleagues (table 1, page 12)	4.93	3.41	2.78	2.89
D3e	Professional associations (table 1, page 12)	4.64	3.70	2.78	3.09
D3i	Product announcements (table 1, page 12)	5.70	3.81	2.28	2.82
D3a	Conferences (table 1, page 12)	2.66	3.52	2.38	3.01
D3h	Internet (table 1, page 12)	4.67	3.85	1.73	2.77
D3g	Ongoing contact (table 1, page 12)	3.66	3.54	1.43	1.81

Survey item	Question wording	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
A2e	*Satisfaction with longitudinal studies area* (table 3 and figure 10, page 16)	6.14	3.39	4.17	2.48

Survey item	Question wording	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
B1	*Percentage who used data files in past 3 years* (figure 13, page 21)	3.86	2.62	0.73	1.45

Survey item	Question wording	Federal policymakers	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
	Percentage who used NCES services				
C2h1	Ordered NCES publications (figure 19, page 31)	4.90	2.73	1.31	1.91
C2i1	Ordered NCES electronic data files (figure 19, page 31)	2.21	2.09	0.41	1.10
C2j1	Mailed a request for NCES information (figure 19, page 31)	2.21	2.05	1.02	1.36

Survey item	Question wording	Overall	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
	Percentage who indicated organization as most favorably impressed			
E2	ASCD (figure 24, page 39)	10.75	11.60	19.41
	State Department of Education (figure 24, page 39)	1.15	1.016	12.27

Survey item	Question wording	Overall	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
	Percentage who found ASCD better than NCES			
E3a	Coverage of topics (figure 26, page 42)	4.91	5.31	6.39
E3b	Frequency of data collection (figure 26, page 42)	5.62	6.08	7.13
E3c	Timeliness (figure 26, page 42)	5.40	5.84	9.74
E3d	Responsiveness (figure 26, page 42)	4.93	5.33	7.78
E3e	Knowledge of staff (figure 26, page 42)	6.74	7.28	10.27
E3f	Effort to meet needs (figure 26, page 42)	4.88	5.27	8.32
E3g	Quality of product (figure 26, page 42)	5.26	5.70	5.92

Table 24.—Standard error tables for selected estimates (percents) included in this report (cont)

Survey item	Question wording	Overall	State policymakers	Local policymakers	Academic researchers
	Percentage who found State Department of Education better than NCES				
E3a	Coverage of topics (figure 27, page 43)	6.38	4.76	6.87	12.60
E3b	Frequency of data collection (figure 27, page 43)	7.40	10.03	8.02	4.23
E3c	Timeliness (figure 27, page 43)	6.10	9.37	6.58	12.12
E3d	Responsiveness (figure 27, page 43)	5.90	8.83	6.39	7.73
E3e	Knowledge of staff (figure 27, page 43)	7.19	9.90	7.77	9.44
E3f	Effort to meet needs (figure 27, page 43)	5.92	9.21	6.40	9.12
E3g	Quality of product (figure 27, page 43)	6.84	8.71	7.41	6.59

Survey item	Question wording	Elementary/ secondary local policymakers	Postsecondary local policymakers
D1	*Percentage who frequently used NCES products/services* (figure 6, page 9)	1.79	1.82
C1	*Percentage who know how to contact NCES* (figure 17, page 29)	1.87	2.00
	Percentage who indicated organization as most favorably impressed		
E2	ASCD (text, page 40)	12.68	-
	State Department of Education (text, page 40)	1.14	1.01
	Census (text, page 40)	-	0.10
	ACE (text, page 40)	-	1.16

NOTE: "–" indicates no percent estimate provided in text.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Statistical Tests

The standard statistical theory of testing hypotheses must be used to compare two estimates. A difference between two estimates is statistically significant when it can be concluded with sufficient confidence that they are unequal in the two subpopulations. In other words, the percentages, p_1 and p_2, from two independent samples (for example, two strata) can be compared to find out if they are significantly different (i.e., if the corresponding population percentages P_1 and P_2 are different) using the following formula:

$$t = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{\frac{p_1(100 - p_1)}{n_1 - 1} + \frac{p_2(100 - p_2)}{n_2 - 1}}}$$

where p_1 and p_2 are the observed sample percentages, n_1 and n_2 are the corresponding number of respondents (assumed to be larger than 20), and when the sampling fractions are small.

If, however, the sampling fractions are not small, the finite population correction factors must be taken into account and the corresponding t has the following form:

$$t = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(N_1 - n_1)p_1(100 - p_1)}{N_1(n_1 - 1)} + \frac{(N_2 - n_2)p_2(100 - p_2)}{N_2(n_2 - 1)}}}$$

where N_1 and N_2 are the population sizes.

If the null hypothesis $H_0: P_1 = P_2$ is tested against the alternative hypothesis $H_A: P_1 \neq P_2$, a two-tailed test is performed. That is, if $|t|$ is greater than 1.96 (normal deviate), the null hypothesis is rejected at a 5 percent level of significance. (Note: All differences of percentages included in this report were significant when tested at the 5 percent level of significance.)

Bonferroni Adjustment

In this sample survey, there are four strata. If we make comparisons between the strata, common statistical practice requires that the procedure be done in such a way as to control for error in the decision process. For example, when we say that there is a significant difference between two stratum means, we are able to say we are at least 95 percent confident there is a real difference in the population, not just a random difference due to sampling.

All possible pairwise comparisons between the four strata (6 total) can be analyzed simultaneously with the data. The more comparisons that are made, the greater the potential that some of these comparisons will be declared significant when they are actually not different in the population. In this case, additional statistical measures are employed to control the overall error of the decision process.

One of the common procedures is to apply the adjustment due to Bonferroni. For six comparisons, we use the critical value of 2.65 corresponding to the Type I error set equal to (0.05/6) for each comparison, instead of 1.96 at the usual 5 percent level of significance.

Comparing Two Percentages Within a Stratum

For comparing two percentages, p_1 and p_2, within the same stratum (when these two percentages do not add to 100), we have used the following formula:

$$t = \frac{p_1 - p_2}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{(N-n)}{N(n-1)}\right]\left[2p_1(100-p_1)+2p_2(100-p_2)-(p_1+p_2)(100-p_1-p_2)\right]}}$$

where,

N is equal to the stratum size

n is equal to the number of respondents in the stratum

p_1 and p_2 are the two observed sample percentages.

APPENDIX C

Weighted Number and Percent of Respondents for Selected Survey Items, by Customer Group

Table 25.—Usage of NCES products and services, by customer group

	Total		Used NCES products or services		Never used NCES products or services	
	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent
Total	20,033	100%	9,818	49%	10,215	51%
Federal policymakers	129	100%	104	80%	25	20%
State policymakers	361	100%	283	78%	78	22%
Local policymakers	18,464	100%	8,792	48%	9,672	52%
Elementary/secondary	16,365	100%	7,765	47%	8,600	53%
Postsecondary	2,099	100%	1,027	49%	1,072	51%
Academic researchers	1,079	100%	640	59%	439	41%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Table 26.—Usage of NCES publications and reports, by customer group

	Total		Used publications		Did not use publications in the past 3 years	
	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent
Total	20,033	100%	8,841	44%	11,192	56%
Federal policymakers	129	100%	93	72%	36	28%
State policymakers	361	100%	267	74%	94	26%
Local policymakers	18,464	100%	7,930	43%	10,534	57%
Elementary/secondary	16,365	100%	7,080	43%	9,285	57%
Postsecondary	2,099	100%	850	41%	1,249	59%
Academic researchers	1,079	100%	551	51%	528	49%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Table 27.—Usage of NCES electronic data files, by customer group

	Total		Used data files		Did not use data files in the past 3 years	
	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent
Total	20,033	100%	1,439	7%	18,594	93%
Federal policymakers	129	100%	23	18%	106	82%
State policymakers	361	100%	113	31%	248	69%
Local policymakers	18,464	100%	1,155	6%	17,309	94%
Elementary/secondary	16,365	100%	762	5%	15,603	95%
Postsecondary	2,099	100%	393	19%	1,706	81%
Academic researchers	1,079	100%	148	14%	931	86%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Table 28.—Usage of NCES services, by customer group

	Total		Used NCES services		Did not use/were not aware of NCES services in the past 3 years	
	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent	Weighted N	Percent
Total	20,033	100%	5,492	27%	14,541	73%
Federal policymakers	129	100%	82	63%	47	37%
State policymakers	361	100%	239	66%	122	34%
Local policymakers	18,464	100%	4,735	26%	13,729	74%
Elementary/secondary	16,365	100%	3,955	24%	12,410	76%
Postsecondary	2,099	100%	780	37%	1,319	63%
Academic researchers	1,079	100%	437	40%	642	60%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

APPENDIX D

Open-ended Comment Categories

Question A1a: I am going to provide you a list of reasons why you may not have used NCES publications or reports. For each reason, tell me if it applies to you. Any other reason? (please specify)

Code	Description of answer (number of comments)
	Too busy to read NCES publications and reports (21%)
15	Too busy/no time/can only read so much/haven't gotten around to it (21%)
	Use other sources for education data (18%)
05	Use other sources (other) (7%)
06	Local (2%)
07	County (<1%)
09	State/State Department of Education (8%)
13	Association (<1%)
	NCES publications and reports are not needed (14%)
25	Not needed/not useful to work/does not apply (13%)
40	Other data needs (1%)
	Want different levels of analysis which do not seem available (14%)
42	Want local data (5%)
26	School district too small/rural (6%)
47	Data not provided by region or region-level (3%)
	Not aware/never used NCES publications and reports (9%)
18	Not familiar with NCES/not aware of pubs/never used (9%)
	Other staff use them (7%)
16	Other staff use them (7%)
	New position/job doesn't require (7%)
01	New job/position/job doesn't require (7%)
	Too expensive (6%)
52	Cost/too expensive (6%)
	Other (4%)
50	Other (e.g., will use in the future) (4%)
49	Prefer raw data (<1%)

Question B1a: I am going to provide you a list of reasons why you may not have used NCES data files. For each reason, tell me if it applies to you. Any other reason? (please specify)

Code	Description of answer (number of comments)
	New position/job doesn't require (5%)
01	New job position (5%)
	Use other sources (9%)
05	Use other sources (5%)
06	Local (1%)
09	State/State Department of Education (3%)
	Too busy/no exposure to data files (10%)
15	Too busy/no time/can only read so much/staff shortage (10%)
	Other staff use them (3%)
16	Other staff use them (3%)
	Not aware/never used NCES data files (10%)
18	Not familiar with NCES/not aware of data files/never used (5%)
24	Have not tried to access (1%)
76	Recently acquired technology, but haven't used it to access NCES materials (5%)
	Prefer written format (3%)
22	Prefer written format/prefer not to use electronic files (3%)
	NCES electronic data files are not needed (5%)
25	Not needed/not useful to work/does not apply (5%)
	Data files are difficult to use (2%)
39	Difficulty accessing files/awkward to use/problem with data file documentation (2%)
	Specific data need/aggregation which is not available (5%)
37	Specific data need/aggregation which is not available (1%)
48	Need regional data (2%)
49	Need state-level data (2%)
	Too expensive (5%)
60	Cost/too expensive (5%)
	Computer limitations/problems (43%)
70	Lack of technology/not able to access/office not computerized (27%)
71	No connection to Internet (10%)
75	Lack of skills/don't know how to use (7%)
	Other (1%)
80	Other (1%)

Question E4: We've not finished with the questions with pre-defined responses. We are interested in how NCES may better meet your needs. Please tell me about any problems you have or ways NCES might improve its products.

Code	Description of answer (number of comments)
Problems with products (26%)	
1	Improve timeliness (15%)
2	Too lengthy/produce short research summaries/writing clarity/format (5%)
3	Other problems (< 1%)
4	Recommend IPEDS improvement (1%)
9	Provide user-friendly electronic data/improve CD ROM/improve DAS/improve user manual (2%)
32	Provide more topical focus/discuss policy implications (3%)
Access/awareness (42%)	
11	Improve access to NCES products and services/mailing list problems/ improve access to staff (2%)
13	Increase awareness of NCES products and services/improve marketing (includes specific suggestions) (16%)
15	Expand use of Internet/suggestions for web site improvement (3%)
70	Unaware of NCES products and services (6%)
72	Send information on NCES (14%)
75	Other access and awareness issues (1%)
Data needs (17%)	
20	No need for NCES products and/or services (1%)
24	Need other data/different stratification (11%)
29	Use another source (3%)
30	More collaboration with states/federal govt. agencies/other sources of data (1%)
33	Use national data for benchmarking (1%)
Expressions of satisfaction (13%)	
90	Satisfied/no problems (13%)
Other (1%)	
91	Other (1%)
Comments about the survey (2%)	
96	Survey (positive comments) (1%)
97	Survey (negative comments) (1%)

Question F2: What are your needs for education data?

Code	Description of answer (number of comments)
Curriculum and planning/standards (24%)	
30	Curriculum (8%)
31	Program planning and evaluation (2%)
32	Trends and projections (2%)
35	Standards/benchmarking (4%)
36	Testing and assessment/student achievement (8%)
Specific education issues (17%)	
40	Specific education issues (e.g., minorities/diversity, bilingual education, dropout rates, gifted students, at-risk population, early childhood, religious education) (3%)
45	Drugs/violence/student behavior (1%)
50	Higher education data (general and other) (< 1%)
56	K-12 education data (general) (2%)
57	Rural schools (1%)
60	Specific subject field (e.g., math, science) (1%)
61	Special education (1%)
65	Technology (4%)
66	Workforce preparation/national employment data (1%)
67	New or innovative programs/best practices (2%)
Institution/school governance (22%)	
46	Institution/school governance (e.g., teacher/administrator preparation, financial aid, graduate students, admission standards/enrollment, accreditation, facilities) (4%)
70	Grants/contracts (5%)
74	Personnel (e.g., salaries, employment figures) (4%)
75	Budgeting/fiscal planning (4%)
76	Legislation (1%)
77	Demographics (5%)
Local/state/regional (12%)	
80	Specific regional/state/school district information (general) (7%)
81	State/local/institution comparisons (general) (5%)
82	School report cards (1%)
Other (16%)	
89	Want more information about NCES products (1%)
90	Other (9%)
94	Varies/nothing specific/minimal needs (5%)
Uses other sources for education data (10%)	
95	Use other sources (10%)

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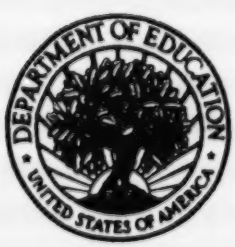

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